

John Lord 1803

THE
WORKS
Of the MOST REVEREND
Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,
LATE
Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY:
CONTAINING
Two Hundred and Fifty Four
SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS.
TOGETHER WITH THE
RULE of FAITH.

To which is Added,
An Alphabetical TABLE of the Principal Matters.

THE TWELFTH EDITION.

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THE

WORKS

OF THE MOST EMINENT

DR. JOHN TILLOTSON

LATE

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury

BY

Two Learned and Eminent

SERMONS

DISCOURSES



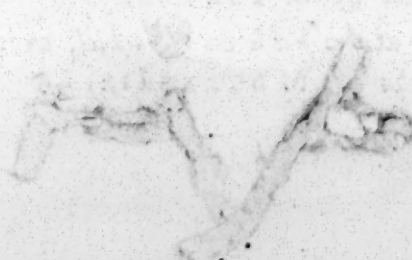
SEVERAL OCCASIONS

TOGETHER WITH

RULE of FAITH

BY

AN EMINENT DIVINE & DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY





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SERMON XXII.

The Lawfulness and Obligation of Oaths.

HEB. vi. 16.

And an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

THE Necessity of Religion to the support of human Society, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, That the Obligation of an Oath, which is so necessary for the Maintenance of Peace and Justice among Men, depends wholly upon the Sense and Belief of a Deity. For no reason can be imagined why any Man that doth not believe a God, should make the least conscience of an Oath, which is nothing else but a solemn Appeal to God as a Witness of the Truth of what we say. So that whoever promotes Atheism and Infidelity, doth the most destructive thing imaginable to human Society, because he takes away the Reverence and Obligation of Oaths: And

SERM. XXII.

VOL. II. A whenever

SERM. whenever that is generally cast off, human Society
 XXII. must disband, and all things run into disorder. The
 just sense whereof made *David* cry out to God with
 so much earnestness, as if the World had been
 cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in
 pieces, *Psal. 12. Help, Lord, for the righteous man*
ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of
men: Intimating, That when Faith fails from among
 Men, nothing but a particular and immediate inter-
 position of the Divine Providence can preserve the
 World from falling into confusion. And our Bles-
 sed Saviour gives this as a Sign of the End of the
 World, and the approaching Dissolution of all
 things, when Faith and Truth shall hardly be found
 among Men, *Luke 18. 8. When the Son of man,*
comes, shall he find Faith on the Earth? This state of
 Things doth loudly call for his coming to destroy
 the World, which is even ready to dissolve and fall
 in pieces of itself, when these Bands and Pillars of
 human Society do break and fail. And surely never
 in any Age was this sign of the coming of the Son
 of Man more glaring and terrible than in this dege-
 nerate Age wherein we live, when almost all sorts of
 Men seem to have broke loose from all Obligations
 to Faith and Truth.

And therefore I do not know any Argument more
 proper and useful to be treated of upon this occasion
 than of the Nature and Obligation of an Oath,
 which is the utmost security that one Man can give
 to another of the Truth of what he says; the strong-
 est tye of Fidelity, the surest ground of Judicial
 Proceedings, and the most firm and sacred Bond
 that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the
 Administration of publick Justice; upon Judge, and
 Jury, and Witnesses.

And for this reason I have pitch'd upon these
 words: In which the Apostle declares to us the great
 use and necessity of Oaths among Men; *an Oath for*
confirmation is to them an end of all strife. He had
 said

said before, that for our greater assurance and com-
fort God hath confirmed his Promises to us by an Oath ; condescending herein to deal with us after the manner of Men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful Matter, confirm what they say by an Oath. And generally when any Doubt or Controversy ariseth between Parties concerning a Matter of Fact, one side affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this contest by an Oath ; *An Oath for confirmation being to them an end of all strife : An Oath for confirmation, sic Beatus, for the greater assurance and establishment of a Thing : Not that an Oath is always a certain and infallible decision of things according to Truth and Right, but that this is the utmost credit that we can give to any thing, and the last effort of Truth and Confidence among Men : After this we can go no farther ; for if the Religion of an Oath will not oblige Men to speak Truth, nothing will. This is the utmost Security that Men can give, and must therefore be the final decision of all Contests ; An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

Now from this assertion of the Apostle concerning the great Use and End of Oaths among Men, I shall take occasion,

1. To consider the *Nature* of an Oath, and the *Kinds* of it.
2. To shew the great *Use* and even *Necessity* of Oaths, in many Cases.
3. To vindicate the *Lawfulness* of them where they are necessary.
4. To shew the sacred *Obligation* of an Oath. I shall be as brief in these as the just handling of them will bear.

I. For the *Nature* of an Oath, and the *Kinds* of it. An Oath is an *Invocation* of God, or an *Appeal* to him as a *Witness* of the *Truth* of what we say. So that an Oath is a sacred thing, as being an act of Religion and an *Invocation* of the *Name* of God : And

SERM. And this, whether the Name of God be expressly
 XXII. mentioned in it or not. If a Man only say, *I swear*,
 or *I take my Oath*, that a Thing is, or is not, so or
 so, or that I will, or will not, do such a thing: Or
 if a Man *answer upon his Oath*, being abjured and
 required so to do: Or if a Man *swear, by Heaven, or*
by Earth, or by any other thing that hath relation to
 God; in all these Cases a Man doth virtually call
 God to witness; and in so doing he doth by conse-
 quence invoke him as a Judge and an Avenger, in
 case what he swears be not true: And if this be ex-
 press the Oath is a formal Imprecation; but whe-
 ther it be, or not, a curse upon ourselves is always
 implied in case of Perjury.

There are *two* sorts of Oaths, *Affertory* and *Promissory*. An *Affertory* Oath is when a Man affirms
 or denies upon Oath a matter of Fact, past, or pre-
 sent: when he swears that a thing was, or is so, or
 not so. A *Promissory* Oath is a Promise confirmed
 by an Oath, which always respects something that is
 future: And if the Promise be made directly and
 immediately to God, then it is called a *Vow*; if to
Men, an *Oath*. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to shew the great *Use* and
 even *Necessity* of Oaths, in many Cases: which is so
 great, that human Society can very hardly, if at all
 subsist long without them. Government would many
 times be very insecure, and for the faithful discharge
 of Offices of great trust, in which the welfare of the
 Publick is nearly concerned, it is not possible to find
 any security equal to that of an Oath; because the
 Obligation of that reacheth to the most secret and
 hidden Practices of Men, and takes hold of them
 in many cases where the Penalty of no human Law
 can have any awe or force upon them, and especial-
 ly, it is (as the *Civil Law* expresseth it) *maximum ex-*
pediendarum litium remedium, the best Means of end-
 ing Controversies. And where Mens Estates or
 Lives are concerned, 'tis Evidence but what is af-
 firmed

fur'd by an Oath will be thought sufficient to decide SERM. the Matter, so as to give full and general satisfacti- XXII. on to Mankind. For in Matters of so great concernment, when Men have all the assurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to sit down, and rest satisfied with it. And among all Nations an Oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and satisfactory way of deciding such controversies.

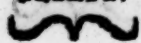
III. The *third* thing I proposed was, to vindicate the *Lawfulness* of Oaths, where they are necessary. And it is a very strong inducement to believe the Lawfulness of them, that the unavoidable condition of human Affairs hath made them so necessary. The Apostle takes it for granted, that an Oath is not only of great use in human Affairs, but in many Cases of great necessity, to confirm a doubtful Thing, and to put an end to Controversies which cannot otherwise be decided to the Satisfaction of the Parties contending; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* And indeed it is hardly imaginable that God should not have left that lawful, which is so evidently necessary to the peace and security of Mankind.

But because there is a *Seet* sprung up in our memory, which hath called in question the Lawfulness of all Oaths, to the great mischief and disturbance of human Society, I shall endeavour to search this Matter to the bottom, and to manifest how unreasonable and groundless this Opinion is. And to this end, I shall,

First, Prove the Lawfulness of Oaths from the Authority of this Text, and from the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it.

Secondly, I shall shew the weakness and insufficiency of the Grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from Reason, or from Scripture, which last they principally rely upon; and if it could be

SERM. made out from thence, would determine the
XXII. Case.



I. I shall prove the Lawfulness of Oaths from the Authority of this Text, and the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it. Because the Apostle doth not only speak of the Use of Oaths among Men without any manner of censure and reproof, but as a commendable Custom and Practice, and in many Cases necessary for the confirmation of doubtful Matters, and in order to the final decision of Controversies and Differences among Men. For,

First, He speaks of it as the general Practice of Mankind, to confirm things by an Oath, in order to the ending of Differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more universally obtained in all Ages and Nations of the World; than which there is not a more certain Indication that a thing is agreeable to the Law of Nature and the best Reason of Mankind. And that this was no degenerate Practice of Mankind, like that of Idolatry, is from hence evident; that when God separated a People to himself, it was practised among them, by the holy Patriarchs, *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many Cases commanded by the Law of *Moses*; which, had it been a thing evil in itself, and forbidden by the Law of Nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, Another undeniable Argument from the Text of the lawfulness of Oaths is, that God himself, in condescension to the Custom of Men who use to confirm and give credit to what they say by an Oath, is represented by the Apostle as confirming his Promise to us by an Oath, *Ver. 13. When God made the Promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he swears by himself. For men verily swear by the greater; and an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability*

mutability of his Counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: SERM. XXII. which he certainly would not have done, had an Oath been unlawful in itself. For that had been to comply with Men in an evil Practice, and by his own Example to give countenance to it in the highest manner: But though God condescend to represent himself to us after the manner of Men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own Nature evil and sinful.

Thirdly, From the great Usefulness of Oaths in human Affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our Word, and to put an end to Contestations. Now that which serves to such excellent Purposes, and is so convenient for human Society, and for mutual Security and Confidence among Men, ought not easily to be presumed unlawful, till it be plainly proved to be so. And if we consider the Nature of an Oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the least appearance of evil in it. There is surely no Evil in it, as it is an Act of Religion; nor as it is an Appeal to God as a Witness and Avenger in case we swear falsely; nor as it is a Confirmation of a doubtful Matter; nor as it puts an end to Strife and Controversy. And these are all the essential Ingredients of an Oath, and the Ends of it; and they are all so good, that they rather commend it, than give the least colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to shew the weakness and insufficiency of the Grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from *Reason* or from *Scripture*.

First, From *Reason*. They say the necessity of an Oath is occasioned by the want of Truth and Fidelity among Men. And that every Man ought to demean himself with that Faithfulness and Integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his Word; and then Oaths will be needless. This pretence will be fully answered if we consider these *two* Things.

SERM.

XXII. I. That in Matters of great Importance no other Obligation, besides that of an Oath, hath been thought sufficient amongst the best and wisest of Men, to assert their Fidelity to one another. *Even the best of men* (to use the words of a great Author) *have not trusted the best men without it.* As we see in very remarkable Instances, where Oaths have passed between those who might be thought to have the greatest confidence in one another: As between *Abraham* and his old faithful Servant *Eliezer*, concerning the choice of a Wife for his Son: Between Father and Son, *Jacob* and *Joseph*, concerning the Burial of his Father in the Land of *Canaan*: Between two of the dearest and most intimate Friends, *David* and *Jonathan*, to assure their Friendship to one another; and it had its effect long after *Jonathan's* Death, in the saving of *Mephibosheth*, when reason of State and the security of his Throne seem'd to move *David* strongly to the contrary; for it is expressly said, 2 Sam. 21. 7. that *David* spared *Mephibosheth*, *Jonathan's* Son, *because of the oath of the Lord that was between them*; implying, that had it not been for his Oath, other Considerations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the rest of *Saul's* Children.

2. This Reason, which is alledged against Oaths among Men, is much stronger against God's confirming his Promises to us by an Oath. For he, who is Truth itself, is surely of all other most to be credited upon his bare Word, and his Oath needless to give confirmation to it; and yet he condescends to add his Oath to his Word; and therefore that Reason is evidently of no force.

Secondly, From Scripture. Our Saviour seems altogether to forbid swearing in any Case, *Matt. 5. 33, 34. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself: but I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven, &c.*

But

But let your Communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; SERM. for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. And XXII. this Law St. James recites, chap. 5. ver. 12. as that which Christians ought to have a very particular and principal regard to; *above all things, my Brethren, swear not:* And he makes the breach of this Law a damning Sin, *lest ye fall into condemnation.* But the Authority of our Saviour alone is sufficient, and therefore I shall only consider that Text.

And, because here lies the main strength of this Opinion of the Unlawfulness of Oaths, it is very fit that this Text be fully consider'd; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our Saviour's meaning by this Prohibition wholly to forbid the use of Oaths.

But before I enter upon this Matter, I will readily grant, that there is scarce any Error whatsoever that hath a more plausible colour from Scripture, than this; which makes the Case of those who are seduced into it the more pityable: But then it ought to be consider'd, how much this Doctrine of the Unlawfulness of Oaths reflects upon the Christian Religion: since it is so evidently prejudicial both to human Society in general, and particularly to those Persons that entertain it: neither of which ought rashly to be supposed and taken for granted, concerning any Law delivered by our Saviour: Because upon these terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the Divine Wisdom of our Saviour's Doctrine, and the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion. Of the Inconvenience of this Doctrine to human Society, I have spoken already. But besides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them suspected to Government, and in many Cases incapable of the common Benefits of Justice and other Privileges of human Society, and exposeth them to great Penalties, as the Constitution of all Laws and Governments at present is, and it is not easy to imagine how they should be otherwise. And,

SERM. which is very considerable in this Matter, it sets
 XXII. those who refuse Oaths upon very unequal terms
 with the rest of Mankind, if where the Estates and
 Lives of Men are equally concern'd, their bare Testimonies shall be admitted without an Oath, and others shall be obliged to speak upon Oath : Nothing being more certain in Experience than that many Men will lie for their Interest, when they will not be perjured, God having planted in the natural Consciences of Men a secret dread of Perjury above most other Sins. And this inconvenience is so great, as to render those who refuse Oaths in all Cases almost intolerable to human Society. I speak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to persuade them to measure Truth by their Interest : but on the other hand, I must needs say, that it is no Argument either of a wise or good Man to take up any Opinion, especially such a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon slight Grounds. And this very Consideration, that it is so much to their inconvenience, may justly move them to be very careful in the Examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this Prohibition of our Saviour ; and to this purpose, I desire these *three* Things may be well consider'd.

First, That several Circumstances of these words of our Saviour do manifestly shew, that they ought to be interpreted in a limited Sense, as only forbidding Swearing in common Conversation ; *needless* and *heedless* Oaths (as one expresseth it) and in general all voluntary Swearing, unless upon some great and weighty Cause, in which the glory of God and the good of the Souls of Men is concerned. For that in such Cases a voluntary Oath may be lawful, I am induced to believe from the Example of St. Paul, who useth it more than once upon such Occasions ; of which I shall hereafter give particular Instances.

And

And this was the sense of wise Men among the SERM. XXII.
Heathen, that Men should not swear but upon necessity and great occasion. Thus *Eusebius*, the Philosopher in *Stobæus*, counsels Men. Some (says he) advise Men to be careful to swear the Truth; but I advise principally that Men do not easily swear at all, that is, not upon any slight but only upon weighty Occasions: To the same purpose *Epictetus*, Shun Oaths wholly, if it be possible; if not, however as much as thou canst: And so likewise *Simplicius* in his Comment upon him, We ought wholly to shun swearing, except upon Occasions of great Necessity. And *Quintilian* among the Romans, *In totum jurare, nisi ubi necesse est, gravi viro parum convenit*; To swear at all, except where it is necessary, does not well suit with a wise Man.

And, that this Prohibition of our Saviour's ought to be understood of Oaths in ordinary Conversation, appears from the opposition which our Saviour makes, *Swear not at all; but let your Communication be yea, yea*; That is, in your ordinary Commerce and Affairs do not interpose Oaths, but say and do. And this is very much confirmed, in that our Saviour does not under this general Prohibition instance in such Oaths as are expressly by the Name of God: The reason whereof is this; The *Jews* thought it unlawful in ordinary communication to swear expressly by the Name of God, but lawful to swear by the Creatures, as by *Heaven* and *Earth*, &c. So that our Saviour's meaning is as if he had said, You think you may swear in common conversation, provided you do not swear by the Name of God; but I say unto you, let your Communication be without Oaths of any kind: you shall not so much as swear by *Heaven* or by *Earth*, because God is virtually invoked in every Oath. And unless we suppose this to be our Saviour's meaning, I do not see what good Reason can be given why our Saviour should only forbid them to swear by the Creatures, and not much

SERM. rather by the Name of God; such Oaths being
 XXII. surely of all others most to be avoided, as being the
 most direct Abuse and Profanation of the Name of
 God.

Secondly, It is very considerable to the explaining of this Prohibition, that there are like general Expressions in other *Jewish* Authors concerning this very Matter, which yet must of necessity be thus limited. *Maimonides* from the ancient *Rabbies*, gives this Rule, that *it is best not to swear at all*. And *Philo* useth almost the same Words. And *Rabbi Jonathan* comes very near our Saviour's Expression, when he says, *The just Man will not swear at all; not so much as by the common Names of God, nor by his Attributes, nor by his Works, as by Heaven, or the Angels, or by the Law*. Now it is not imaginable, that these learned *Jews* should condemn Oaths in all Cases, when the Law of *Moses* did in many Cases expressly require them. And therefore they are to be understood of voluntary Oaths in ordinary conversation. And that the *Jews* meant this by not swearing at all, seems to be very plain from a Passage in *Josephus*, who says that the Sect of the *Essenes* forbade their Disciples to swear at all; and yet he tells us at the same time, that they who were admitted into that Sect took an Oath to observe the Laws and Rules of it. So that they who forbade to swear at all, allowed of Oaths imposed by the Authority of Superiors.

Thirdly, Which will peremptorily decide this Matter, This Prohibition of our Saviour's cannot be understood to forbid all Oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive Christians, and of the Apostles, and even of our Lord himself. *Origen* and *Tertullian* tells us, that the Christians refused to swear by the Emperor's *Genius*; not because it was an Oath, but because they thought it to be Idolatrous: But the same *Tertullian* says, that the Christians were willing to swear *per salutem*

lutem Imperatoris, by the health and safety of the Empe- SERM.
ror. Athanasius being accused to *Constantius* purged XXII.
himself by Oath, and desired that his Accuser might
be put to his Oath *sub attestatione veritatis, by cal-*
ling the Truth to witness; by which Form (says he)
we Christians are wont to swear. But, which is more
than this, *St. Paul*, upon weighty Occasions, does se-
veral times in his *Epistles* call God to witness for the
Truth of what he says; which is the very formality
of an Oath, *God is my witness*, Rom. 1. 9. *As God*
is true, our word was not yea and nay, 2 Cor. 1. 18.
and v. 23. *I call God for a record upon my soul.*
Before God I lye not, Gal. 1. 20. *God is my record*,
Phil. 1. 8. *God is my witness*, 1 Thes. 2. 5. These
are all unquestionable Oaths; which we cannot ima-
gine *St. Paul* would have used, had they been direct-
ly contrary to our Saviour's Law. And whereas
some defend this upon account of his extraordinary
Inspiration, I cannot possibly see how this mends the
Matter. For certainly it is very inconvenient to say
that they who were to teach the Precepts of Christ
to others, did themselves break them by Inspira-
tion.

But I go yet farther, and shall urge an example be-
yond all exception.

Our Saviour himself (who surely would not be the
first Example of breaking his own Laws) did not
refuse to answer upon Oath, being called thereto at
his Trial. So we find *Matt. 26. 63. The high Priest*
said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that
thou tell us whether thou be Christ the Son of God;
that is, he required him to answer this Question up-
on Oath. For among the *Jews*, the Form of giving
an Oath to Witnesses and others, was not by ten-
dering a formal Oath to them, as the Custom is
among us, but by adjuring them, that is, requiring
to answer upon Oath: As is plain from *Levit. 5. 1.*
If a man hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness
whether

SERM. whether he hath seen or known of such a thing; if he
 XXII. do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. If he
 have heard the voice of swearing, that is, if being
 adjured or demanded to answer upon Oath concern-
 ing what he hath seen or heard, he do not utter the
 Truth, he is perjured. Now to this adjuration of the
 high Priest our Saviour answered, *Thou hast said*; which words are not avoiding to answer (as some have thought) but a direct Answer, as if he had said, *It is as thou sayst, it is even so, I am the Son of God.* For upon this Answer the high Priest said, *He hath spoken blasphemy.* But to put the matter beyond all doubt, St. Mark tells us, *Mark 14. 61.* That he being asked by the high Priest, *Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed?* He answered, *I am.* So that unless we will interpret our Saviour's Doctrine contrary to his own Practice, we cannot understand him to forbid all Oaths, and consequently they are not unlawful.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear satisfaction in this Matter to those that are willing to receive it.

As for the Ceremonies in use among us in the taking of Oaths, it is no just Exception against them, that they are not found in Scripture. For this was always matter of Liberty; and several Nations have used several Rites and Ceremonies in their Oaths. It was the Custom of the Grecians, to swear laying their Hands upon the Altar, *quod sanctissimum jusjurandum est habitum*, (saith A. Gellius) which was looked upon as the most sacred form of swearing. The Romans were wont *Jovem Lapidem jurare*; that is, he that swore by Jupiter held a Flint-stone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with these words, *Si sciens fallo, ita me Jupiter bonis omnibus ejiciat ut ego hunc lapidem*: If I knowingly falsify, God throw me out of all my Possessions as I do this Stone.

In Scripture there are two Ceremonies mention'd of Swearing: One of putting the hand under the Thigh
 of

of him to whom the Oath was made. Thus *Eliezer* SERM. swore to *Abraham*, *Gen.* 24. and *Joseph* to *Jacob*, *XXII.* *Gen.* 47. The other was by lifting up the hand to heaven. Thus *Abraham* expresseth the manner of an Oath, *Gen.* 14. 22. *I have lift up my hand to the most high God.* And thus God condescending to the manner of Men expresseth himself *Deut.* 32. 40. *If I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear.* In allusion to this custom the *Psalmist* prescribes the perjured person, *Psal.* 144. 8. *Whose mouth speaketh vanity; and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* And there is not the least intimation in Scripture that either of these Ceremonies were prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by Men. And thus among us the Ceremony of Swearing is by laying the hand on the holy Gospel, and kissing the Book; which is both very solemn and significant. And this is the Reason why this solemn kind of Oath is called a *corporal Oath*, and was anciently so called; because the Sign or Ceremony of it is performed by some part of the *Body*. And this Solemnity is an aggravation of the Perjury, because it makes it both more deliberate, and more scandalous.

I shall speak but briefly to the

IV. And last particular, *viz.* the sacred *Obligation* of an Oath: Because it is a solemn Appeal to God as a Witness of the Truth of what we say: To God, I say, from whose piercing and all-seeing Eye, from whose perfect and infinite Knowledge, nothing is or can be hid; so that there is not a Thought in our Heart but he sees it, nor a Word in our Tongue but he discerns the Truth or Falshood of it. Whenever we swear, we appeal to his Knowledge, and refer ourselves to his just Judgment who is the powerful Patron and Protector of Right, and the Almighty Judge and Avenger of all Falshood and Unrighteousness. So that it is not possible for Men to lay a more sacred and solemn Obligation upon their Consciences than by the Religion of an Oath. *Moses* very well expresseth

SERM. preſſeth it, by *binding our Souls with a Bond*, Num.
 XXII. 30. 2. *If a man ſwear an oath, to bind his ſoul with*
 a bond; intimating that he that ſwears lays the ſtrong-
 eſt obligation upon himſelf, and puts his Soul in pawn
 for the Truth of what he ſays. And this Obligati-
 on no Man can violate, but at the utmoſt peril of the
 Judgment and Vengeance of God. For every Oath
 implies a Curſe upon our ſelves in caſe of Perjury,
 as *Plutarch* obſerves. And this was always the ſenſe
 of Mankind concerning the Obligation of Oaths.
Nullum vinculum ad aſtringendam fidem majores noſtri
jurejurando arctius eſſe voluerunt, ſaith *Tully*: Our
 Forefathers had no ſtricter Bond whereby to oblige the
 Faith of Men to one another, than that of an Oath. To
 the ſame purpoſe is that in the Comedian, *Aliud ſi ſci-*
rem, qui firmare meam apud vos poſſem fidem, ſanctius
quam juſjurandum, id pollicerer tibi. If I knew any
 thing more ſacred than an Oath, whereby to confirm
 to you the Truth of what I ſay, I would make uſe
 of it.

I will crave your patience a little longer, whiſt
 by way of inference from this Diſcourſe, I repre-
 ſent to you the great Sin of *Swearing in common Con-*
verſation, upon trivial and needleſs Occaſions, and
 the heinouſneſs of the Sin of *Perjury*.

1. *First*, the great Sin of *Swearing* upon trivial
 and needleſs Occaſions, in common Converſation.
 Becauſe an Oath is a ſolemn thing, and reſerved for
 great Occaſions, to give confirmation to our word in
 ſome weighty matter, and to put an end to Contro-
 verſies which cannot otherwiſe be peremptorily and
 ſatisfactorily decided. And therefore to uſe Oaths
 upon light Occaſions argues great Profaneneneſs and
 Irreverence of Almighty God. So *Ulpian* the great
Roman Lawyer obſerves, *Nonnullos eſſe faciles ad ju-*
randum contemptu Religionis: that *Mens proneneſs to*
ſwearing comes from a Contempt of Religion; than which
 nothing diſpoſeth Men more to Atheiſm and Infide-
 lity. Beſides that it doth many times ſurpriſe Men

unawares into Perjury: And how can it be other-SERM.
 wise, when Men use to interlard all their careless XXII.
 Talk with Oaths, but that they must often be per-
 jured? And which is worse, it prepares Men for
 deliberate Perjury; for with those who are accus-
 tomed to swear upon light occasions, an Oath will go
 off with them more roundly about weightier Mat-
 ters. *From a common custom of swearing (saith Hie-
 rocles) men easily slide into Perjury: Therefore (says
 he) if thou wouldst not be perjured, do not use to swear.*
 And this perhaps is the meaning of St. James, when
 he cautions Christians so vehemently against common
 swearing, *ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὑποκριὰς πέλῃτε*, (for so some of the best
 ancient Copies read it) *lest ye fall into hypocrisy*, that
 is, lest ye lie and be perjured, by using yourselves
 to rash and inconsiderate swearing.

And Men expose themselves to this danger to no
 purpose; Oaths in common Discourse being so far
 from confirming a Man's word, that with wise Men
 they much weaken it. For common swearing (if it
 have any serious meaning at all) argues in a Man a
 perpetual distrust of his own reputation, and is an
 acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not
 to be worthy of credit. And it is so far from adorn-
 ing and filling a Man's Discourse, that it makes it
 look swoln and bloated, and more bold and blustering
 than becomes Persons of gentle and good breeding.
 Besides that it is a great incivility, because it highly
 offends and grates upon all sober and considerate Per-
 sons; who cannot be presumed with any manner of
 Ease and Patience to hear God affronted, and his
 great and glorious Name so irreverently tost upon
 every slight occasion.

And it is no excuse to Men that many times they
 do it ignorantly, and not observing and knowing
 what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation
 of a Fault, that a Man hath got the habit of it so
 perfect, that he commits it when he does not think
 of it. Which consideration should make Men op-
 pose

SERM. pose the beginnings of this Vice, lest it grow into
 XXII. a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, nisi qui expertus est, quam sit difficile consuetudinem jurandi extinguere*, saith St. Austin; No man knows, but he that hath tried, how hard it is to get rid of this Custom of swearing: But yet it is certain Men may do it, by resolution and great care of themselves: For he that can chuse whether he will speak or not, can chuse whether he will swear or not when he speaks. *Major consuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat*; The more inveterate a Custom is, the greater care should be used to break ourselves off it.

In short, this practice is so contrary to so plain a Precept of our Saviour, and by the breach whereof we incur so great a Danger (as St. James assures us) that it must be a great Charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common Custom of swearing with a serious belief of the *Christian Religion*: which I would to God those who are concerned would seriously lay to heart; especially, since this sin, of all others, hath the least of Temptation to it. Profit or Pleasure there is none in it, nor any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For though some Men pour out Oaths so freely, as if they came naturally from them, yet surely no Man is born of a swearing constitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is Custom and Fashion: But to shew that this is no excuse, it is very observable that it is particularly in the matter of Oaths and Perjury that the Holy Ghost gives that caution, *Tbou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*.

And lastly, it deserves to be considered, that this Sin is so much the greater because of the frequent returns of it in those that are accustomed to it. So that although it were but small in itself (as it is not) yet the frequent Practice of this Sin would quickly mount it up to a great score.

2. Secondly,

2. *Secondly*, to represent the heinousness of the SERM. Sin of *Perjury*. But before I aggravate this Crime, **XXII.** it is fit to let Men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1. When a Man asserts upon Oath what he knows to be otherwise : Or promiseth what he does not intend to perform. In both these Cases the very act of swearing is Perjury. And so likewise when a Man promiseth upon Oath to do that which it is unlawful for him to do, because this Oath is contrary to a former Obligation.

2^{dly}, When a Man is uncertain whether what he swears to, be true. This likewise is Perjury, in the act ; though not of the same degree of guilt with the former, because it is not so fully and directly against his Knowledge and Conscience. For Men ought to be certain of the Truth of what they assert upon Oath, and not to swear at a venture. And therefore no Man ought positively to swear to the Truth of any thing, but what he himself hath seen or heard : This being the highest assurance Men are capable of in this World. In like manner, he is guilty of Perjury in the same degree, who promiseth upon Oath what he is not morally and reasonably certain he shall be able to perform.

3^{dly}, They are likewise guilty of Perjury, who do not use great plainness and simplicity in Oaths ; but answer *equivocally* and doubtfully, or with reservation of something in their Minds, thinking thereby to save the Truth of what they say. And we all know who they are that make use of these Arts, and maintain them to be lawful ; to the infinite scandal of the Christian Religion and prejudice of human Society, by doing what in them lies to destroy all Faith and mutual confidence among Men. For what can be a greater affront to God, than to use his Name to deceive Men ? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and use of Oaths, which are *for confirmation*, and to *put an end to strife* ?

Whereas

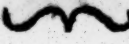
SERM. Whereas by these Arts the Thing is left in the same
 XXII. uncertainty it was before, and there is no decision of
 it. For there is hardly any form of Words can be
 devised so plain, as not to be liable to Equivocation:
 To be sure a Man when he swears may always reserve
 something in his Mind which will quite alter the
 sense of whatever he can say or promise upon Oath.
 And this may be laid down for a certain Rule, That
 all departure from the simplicity of an Oath is a de-
 gree of Perjury, and a Man is never a whit the less
 forsworn, because his Perjury is a little finer and more
 artificial than ordinary. And though Men think
 by this device to save themselves harmless from the
 guilt of so great a Sin, they do really increase it, by
 adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mock-
 ing God and deceiving themselves.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of *mental reservation*, that the whole Proposition, as made up of what is express'd in words, and of that which is reserved in the Mind, is true; for instance, if a Man being ask'd upon Oath whether he be a Priest, shall answer he is not, reserving in his Mind that he is not a Priest of *Bacchus*, or some such thing, the whole Proposition is true, and then they say a Man may swear to that which is true, without danger of Perjury: This is of no force, because, though the whole Proposition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that Sincerity which ought to be in an Oath: And the End of an Oath is hereby likewise defeated, which is to ascertain the Truth of what we say: But if a Man reserve something in his Mind which alters the Truth of what he says, the thing is still as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. Besides, if this be a good reason, a Man may swear with a reservation in all Cases; because the reason equally extends to all Cases; for if the Truth of the Proposition, as made up of what is express'd in words and reserv'd in the Mind, will excuse a Man from Perjury, then no Man can be perjur'd that swears with reservation:

reservation: But this the *Casuits* of the Roman Church do not allow, but only in some particular Cases, as *before an incompetent Judge*, or the like; for they see well enough that if this were allow'd in all Cases, it would destroy all Faith among Men. And therefore since the Reason extends alike to all Cases, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly, He is guilty of Perjury after the Act, who having a real intention when he swears, to perform what he promiseth, yet afterwards neglects to do it: Not for want of Power (for so long as that continues the Obligation ceaseth) but for want of Will, and due regard to his Oath.

Now that Perjury is a most heinous Sin, is evident, because it is contrary to so plain and great a Law of God; one of the ten *Words* or *Precepts* of the Moral Law, *thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*; thou shalt not bring or apply the Name of God to a Falshood: or, as *Josephus* renders it, *Thou shalt not adjure God to a false thing*: Which our Saviour renders yet more plainly, *Matt. 5. 33. Thou shalt not forswear thyself*. For he seems to refer to the 3d Commandment when he says, *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thy self*, as he had done before to the 6th and 7th, when he says, *It was said to them of old time, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery*. So that the primary, if not the sole intention of this Law, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, is to forbid the great Sin of Perjury. And I do not remember that in Scripture the Phrase of *taking God's Name in vain*, is used in any other Sense, And thus it is certainly used, *Prov. 30. 9. Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*, i. e. lest Poverty should tempt me to steal, and stealth should engage me in Perjury. For among the *Jews* an Oath was tendered to him that was suspected of Theft, as appears

SERM. from *Levit. 6. 2.* where it is said, *If any one be*
 XXII. *guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, or sweareth*
 *falsly; he shall restore all that about which he hath*
sworn falsly. Lest I steal, and take the name of the
Lord my God in vain; that is, be perjured, being
examined upon Oath, concerning a thing stoln.
 And for this Reason the Thief and the perjured
 Person are put together, *Zech. 5. 4.* where it is
 said, that *a curse shall enter into the house of the thief,*
and of him that sweareth falsly by the name of God.
 From all which it is very probable, that the whole
 intention of the 3d Commandment is to forbid this
 great Sin of Perjury. To deter men from which, a
 severe Threatning is there added, *for the Lord will*
not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain:
 that is, he will most severely punish such a one. And
 'tis very observable, that there is no threatning ad-
 ded to any other Commandment, but to *this* and the
second; intimating to us, that next to Idolatry and
 the worship of a false God, Perjury is one of the
 greatest Affronts that can be offered to the Divine
 Majesty. This is one of those Sins that cry so loud
 to Heaven, and quicken the pace of God's Judg-
 ments, *Mal. 3. 9.* *I will come near to you in judg-*
ment, and be a swift witness against the swearer: For
 this God threatens utter destruction to the Man and
 his house, *Zech. 5. 4.* speaking of the *curse that go-*
eth over the face of the whole earth: God (says he) *will*
bring it forth, and it shall enter into the house of him
that sweareth falsly by the name of God, and shall re-
main in the midst of his house, and shall consume it
with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. It shall
remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it.
 This Sin by the secret judgment of God undermines
 Estates and Families to the utter Ruin of them.
 And among the *Heathen* it was always reckoned one
 of the greatest of Crimes, and which they did be-
 lieve God did not only punish upon the guilty Per-
 son himself, but upon his Family and Posterity; and
 many

many times upon whole Nations, as the *Prophet* SERM.
 also tells us, that *because of Oaths the Land mourns.* XXII.

I need not use many Words to aggravate this Sin; it is certainly a Crime of the highest Nature. Deliberate Perjury being directly against a Man's Knowledge, so that no Man can commit it without staring his Conscience in the Face; which is one of the greatest Aggravations of any Crime. And it is equally a Sin against *both Tables*; being the highest Affront to God, and of most injurious consequence to Men. It is an horrible abuse of the name of God, an open contempt of his Judgment, and an insolent defiance of his Vengeance: And in respect of Men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular Person who suffers by it, but Treason against human Society; subverting at once the Foundations of publick Peace and Justice, and the private security of every Man's Life and Fortune. It is a defeating of the best and last way that the Wisdom of Men could devise for the decision of doubtful matters. *Solomon* very fully and elegantly expresseth the destructive nature of this Sin, *Prov.* 25. 18. *A false witness against his neighbour is a maw, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.* Intimating, that amongst all the Instruments of Ruin and Mischief that have been devised by Mankind, none is of more pernicious consequence to human Society than Perjury, and breach of Faith. It is a *pestilence* that usually *walketh in Darkness*, and a secret Stab and Blow, against which, many times, there is no possibility of Defence.

And therefore it highly concerns those who upon these and the like occasions are called upon their Oath, whether as *Jurors* or *Witnesses*, to set God before their Eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts whenever they come to take an Oath. And to govern and discharge their Consciences in this matter by known and approv'd Rules, and by the Resolutions of pious and wise Men, and not by the loose

SERM. Reasonings and Resolutions of *Pamphlets*, sent abroad
XXII. to serve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded

Men (whether *Atheists*, or *Papists*, or others) on purpose to debauch the Consciences of Men by teaching them to play fast and loose with Oaths. And it is a very sad sign of the decay of Christian Religion among us, to see so many who call themselves Christians, to make so little conscience of so great a Sin, as even the Light of Nature would blush and tremble at.

I will conclude all with those excellent *Sayings* of the Son of *Sirach* concerning these two Sins (I have been speaking of) prophane Swearing and Perjury, *Eccl.* 23. 9, 10, &c. *Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the holy one. A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence. And if he swear falsely, he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities.* And to represent to us the dreadful nature of this Sin of Perjury, *There is (saith he) a word that is cloathed about with death*, meaning a rash and false Oath; *There is a word that is cloathed about with death*, God grant it be not found in the heritage of *Jacob*: for all such things shall be far from the godly; and they will not wallow in these sins. From which God preserve all good Men, and make them careful to preserve themselves; as they value the present Peace of their own Consciences, and the favour of Almighty God in this World and the other, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, To whom, &c.

SERMON XXIII.

Preached at the Funeral of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Gouge*, the fourth of *November*, 1681. at *St. Anne's Black-Fryars* : With a short Account of his Life.

X LUKE XX. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living ; For all live to him.

THE occasion of these Words of our blessed SERM. Saviour was an Objection which the *Sad-XXIII.* *duces* made against the Resurrection, grounded upon a Case which had some time happened among them, of a Woman that had seven Brethren successively to her Husbands. Upon which Case they put this Question to our Saviour ; *Whose wife of the seven shall this woman be at the Resurrection?* That is, if Men live in another World, how shall the controversy between these seven Brethren be decided ? for they all seem to have an equal Claim to this Woman, each of them having had her to Wife.

This captious Question was not easy to be answered by the *Pharisees*, who fancied the Enjoyments of the next Life to be of the same Kind with the sensual

SERM. fual Pleasures of this World, only greater and more
 XXIII. durable. From which Tradition of the *Jews* con-
 concerning a sensual Paradise, *Mahomet* seems to have
 taken the Pattern of his: as he did likewise many
 other Things from the *Jewish* Traditions. Now
 upon this Supposition, that in the next Life there
 will be marrying and giving in Marriage, it was a
 Question not easily satisfied, *Whose Wife of the seven*
this Woman should then be.

But our Saviour clearly avoids the whole force of
 it, by shewing the different state of Men in this
 World, and in the other. *The children of this*
world (says he) *marry, and are given in marriage, but*
they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world,
and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor
are given in marriage. And he does not barely and
 magisterially assert this Doctrine, but gives a plain
 and substantial Reason for it; because *they cannot die*
any more. After Men have lived a while in this
 World they are taken away by Death, and there-
 fore Marriage is necessary to maintain a Succession
 of Mankind; but in the other World Men shall
 become immortal and live for ever, and then the
 reason of Marriage will wholly cease: For when
 Men can die no more, there will then be no need
 of any new Supplies of Mankind.

Our Saviour having thus cleared himself of this
 Objection by taking away the Ground and Founda-
 tion of it, he produceth an Argument for the Proof
 of the Resurrection, in the Words of my Text:
Now that the dead are raised, Moses even shewed at
the Bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abra-
ham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. That
 is, when in one of his Books God is brought in
 speaking to him out of the Bush, and calling him-
 self by the Title of the God of *Abraham*, the God
 of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. From whence our
 Saviour infers the Resurrection, because *God is not*
the

the God of the dead, but of the living: For all live to SERM.
XXIII.
him.

My design from these Words is, to shew the force and strength of this Argument which our Saviour urgeth for the proof of the Resurrection. In order whereunto I shall,

First, Consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*; and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed.

Secondly, I shall enquire, Whether it be more than an Argument *ad hominem*. And if it be wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist.

And then I shall apply this Doctrine of the Resurrection to the present Occasion.

I. *First*, We will consider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. And this will appear, if we carefully consider these *Four* Things.

1. What our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument.

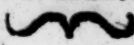
2. The extraordinary Veneration which the *Jews* in general had for the Writings of *Moses*, above any other Books of the Old Testament.

3. The peculiar Notion which the *Jews* had concerning the Use of this Phrase or Expression of *God's being any one's God*.

4. The great respect which the *Jews* had for these three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. For each of these make our Saviour's Argument more forcible against those with whom he disputed.

First, We will consider what our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument. And that was this, that there is another State after this Life, wherein Men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this World. And this doth not only suppose the Immortality of the Soul, but forasmuch as the Body is an essential

SERM. part of Man, doth by consequence infer the Resur-
 XXIII. rection of the Body; because otherwise the *Man*
 would not be happy or miserable in another World.
 But I cannot see any sufficient ground to believe that
 our Saviour intended by this Argument directly and
 immediately to prove the Resurrection of the Body,
 but only by consequence, and as it follows from the
 admission of a future State wherein Men shall be
 rewarded or punished. For that Reason of our Sa-
 viour, that *God is not a God of the dead but of the*
living, if it did directly prove the Resurrection of
 the Body, it would prove that the Bodies of *Abra-*
ham, Isaac and Jacob were raised to life again, at
 or before that time when God spake to *Moses*, and
 called himself the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Ja-*
cob: But we do not believe this; and therefore ought
 not to suppose that it was the intention of our Savi-
 our directly and immediately to prove the Resur-
 rection of the Body, but only (as I said before) a
 future State. And that this was all our Saviour in-
 tended, will more plainly appear, if we consider
 what that Error of the *Sadducees* was which our Sa-
 viour here confutes. And *Josephus*, who very well
 understood the difference of the Sects among the
Jews, and gives a particular Account of them,
 makes not the least mention of any Controversy be-
 tween the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees* about the Re-
 surrection of the Body. All that he says, is this,
 That the *Pharisees* hold the Immortality of the
 Soul, and that there are Rewards and Punishments
 in another World: But the *Sadducees* denied all this,
 and that there was any other State after this Life.
 And this is the very same account with that which
 is given of them in the *New Testament*, ver. 27. of
 this Chapter, *The Sadducees who deny that there is any*
resurrection. The meaning of which is more fully
 declared, *Acts* 23. 8. *The Sadducees say that there is*
no resurrection, neither angel or spirit; but the Phari-
sees confess both. That is, the *Sadducees* denied that
 there

there was any other state of Men after this life, and that SERM.
there was any such thing as an immortal Spirit, either XXIII.
Angels, or the Souls of Men surviving their Bodies. 
And as Dr. *Hammond* hath judiciously observed, this
is the true importance of the Word *ἀναστάσις*, viz. a fu-
ture or another state; unless in such Texts where the
Context does restrain it to the rising again of the Body,
or where some Word that denotes the *Body*, as *σώματος*,
or *σάρκος*, is added to it.

Secondly, The force of this Argument against those
with whom our Saviour disputed will farther ap-
pear, if we consider the great veneration which the
Jews in general had for the Writings of *Moses* a-
bove any other Books of the Old Testament; which
they (especially the *Sadducees*) looked upon only as
Explications and Comments upon the Law of *Moses*:
But they esteemed nothing as a necessary Article of
Faith which had not some Foundation in the Wri-
tings of *Moses*. And this seems to me to be the true
Reason why our Saviour chose to confute them out of
Moses, rather than any other part of the Old Tes-
tament: And not, as many learned Men have ima-
gined, because the *Sadducees* did not receive any
part of the Old Testament, but only the *five* Books
of *Moses*: So that it was in vain to argue against
them out of any other. This I know hath been a
general Opinion, grounded I think upon the mistake
of a passage in *Josephus*, who says, the *Sadducees* only
receive the written Law. But if we carefully confi-
der that Passage, we shall find that *Josephus* doth
not there oppose the Law to the *other Books* of the
Old Testament, which were also written; but to
Oral Tradition. For he says expressly, that the *Sad-
ducees* only receive the written Law, but the *Pharisees*,
over and besides what was written, receive the Oral,
which they call Tradition.

I deny not but that in the *later* Prophets there are
more express Texts for the proof of a future State,
than any are to be found in the books of *Moses*, as

Daniel

SERM. Daniel 12. 2. And many of them that sleep in the
 XXIII. dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life,
 and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And indeed it seems very plain that holy Men among the *Jews*, towards the Expiration of the Legal dispensation, had still clearer and more express apprehensions concerning a future State than are to be met with in the Writings of *Moses*, or any of the *Prophets*.

The Law given by *Moses* did suppose the *Immortality of the Souls of Men*, and the expectation of another Life after this, as Principles of Religion in some degree naturally known; but made no new and express Revelation of these things. Nor was there any occasion for it, the Law of *Moses* being a Political Law, not intended for the Government of Mankind, but of one particular Nation; and therefore was establish'd, as political Laws are, upon temporal Promises and Threatnings; promising temporal Prosperity to the Observation of its Precepts, and threatening the breach of them with temporal Judgments and Calamities.

And this I take to be the true Reason why Arguments fetch'd from another World are so obscurely insisted upon under that Dispensation; not but that another Life after this was always suppos'd, and was undoubtedly the Hope and Expectation of good Men under the Law; but the clear discovery of it was reserv'd for the Times of the *Messias*. And therefore as those Times drew on, and the Son of righteousness was near his rising, the shadows of the night began to be chas'd away, and Men's Apprehensions of a future State to clear up; so that in the time of the *Maccabees* good Men spake with more Confidence and Assurance of these Things.

It is likewise to be consider'd, that the temporal Calamities and Sufferings with which the *Jews* were almost continually harass'd from the time of their Captivity, had very much wean'd good Men from the Consideration of temporal Promises, and awaken'd
 their

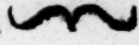
their Minds to the more serious Thoughts of ano-^{SERM.}
ther World. It being natural to Men when they ^{XXIII.}
are destitute of present Comfort, to support them-
selves with the expectation of better things for the
Future, and as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expresses
it, *Chap. 6. v. 18. To fly for refuge to lay hold on the*
hope that is before them, and to employ their Reason
to fortify themselves as well as they can in that per-
suasion.

And this I doubt not was the true Occasion of
those clearer and riper Apprehensions of Good Men
concerning a future State, in those times of Distress
and Persecution: It being very agreeable to the
Wisdom and Goodness of the Divine Providence
not to leave his People destitute of sufficient support
under great Trials and Sufferings: And nothing but
the hopes of a better Life could have born up the
Spirits of Men under such cruel Tortures. And of
this we have a most remarkable Instance in the Hi-
story of the *seven Brethren* in the *Maccabees*, who
being cruelly tortured and put to death by *Antiochus*
do most expressly declare their confident Expectation
of a Resurrection to a better Life. To which Hi-
story the *Apostle* certainly refers, *Heb. 11. 35.* when
he says, *Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance,*
that they might obtain a better resurrection: Where
the Word, which we render *were tortur'd*, is, *ἐτυμ-*
παλύσθησαν, which is the very word used in the *Macca-*
bees, to express the particular kind of Torture used
upon them; besides that being *offered deliverance*
they most resolutely *refus'd to accept* of it, with this
express Declaration, that they hop'd for a *Resurrec-*
tion to a better Life.

But to return to my purpose; Notwithstanding
there might be more clear and express *Texts* to this
purpose in the ancient *Prophets*, yet our Saviour
knowing how great a regard not only the *Sadducees*,
but all the *Jews* had to the Authority of *Moses*, he
thought fit to bring his proof of the Resurrection
out

SERM. out of his Writings, as that which was the most
XXIII. likely to convince them.

W Thirdly, If we consider farther the peculiar Notion which the *Jews* had concerning the use of this Phrase or Expression of *God's being any one's God*. And that was this: That God is no where in Scripture said to be any one's God while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while *Isaac* lived, God is not called the God of *Isaac*, but the *fear of Isaac*. As *Gen. 31. 42. Except the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me*; and *Ver. 53.* when *Laban* made a Covenant with *Jacob*, 'tis said that *Laban did swear by the God of Abraham, and the God of Nabor, and the God of their Fathers*, but *Jacob* swore by the *fear of his Father Isaac*. I will not warrant this Observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For God doth expressly call himself the God of *Isaac*, while *Isaac* was yet alive, *Genes. 28. 13. I am the Lord God of Abraham thy Father, and the God of Isaac*. It is sufficient to my purpose, that this was a Notion anciently current among the *Jews*. And therefore our Saviour's Argument from this Expression must be so much the stronger against *them*: For if the Souls of Men be extinguish'd by death (as the *Sadducees* believ'd) what did it signify to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, to have God called *their God*, after they were dead? But surely, for God to be any one's God, doth signify some great Benefit and Advantage; which yet (according to the Notion which the *Jews* had of this Phrase) could not respect this Life, because, according to *them*, God is not said to be any one's God till after he is dead: But it is thus said of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, after their death, and therefore our Saviour infers very strongly against *them*, that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* were not extinguished by death, but do still live somewhere: For *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. And then he adds by way of further Explication, for
all

all live to him. That is, tho' those Good Men who SERM. are departed this Life, do not still live *to us*, here XXIII. in this World, yet *they live to God*, and are with  him.

Fourthly, If we consider the great respect which the *Jews* had for those three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. They had an extraordinary Opinion of them, and esteemed nothing too great to be thought or said of them. And therefore, we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any Man to assume any thing to himself that might seem to set him above *Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob*. With what indignation did they fly upon our Saviour on this account? *John 4. 12. Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* and *chap 8. ver. 53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham? whom makest thou thyself?* Now they who had so superstitious a veneration for them, would easily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: So that our Saviour doth with great Advantage instance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promise to the utmost, and allow it to signify as much as the Words could possibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the *Text* tells us that this Argument put the *Sadducees* to silence. They durst not attempt a thing so odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to shew the fitness and force of this Argument, to convince those with whom our Saviour disputed. I come now, in the

II. *Second* place, to enquire, Whether this be any more than an Argument *ad hominem*; and if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist.

I do not think it necessary to believe that every Argument used by our Saviour, or his Apostles, is absolutely and in itself conclusive of the matter in debate.

SERM. bate. For an Argument which doth not really
XXIII. prove the thing in question, may yet be a very good

Argument *ad hominem*; and in some Cases more convincing to him with whom we dispute, than that which is a better Argument in itself. Now it is possible, that our Saviour's intention might not be to bring a conclusive Proof of the Resurrection, but only to confute those who would needs be disputing with him. And to that purpose an Argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themselves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual. But although it be not necessary to believe, that this was more than an Argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be absolutely and in itself conclusive of the thing in question. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if we consider these four Things.

1. That for God to be *any one's God* doth signify some very extraordinary Blessing and Happiness to those Persons of whom this is said.

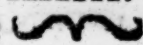
2. If we consider the eminent Faith and Obedience of the Persons to whom this Promise is made.

3. Their Condition in this World.

4. The general Importance of this Promise, abstracting from the Persons particularly specified and named in it, *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*.

First, If we consider that for God to be *any one's God* doth signify some very extraordinary Blessing and Happiness to those Persons of whom this is said. It is a big Word for God to declare himself to be *any one's God*: and the least we can imagine to be meant by it, is that God will in an extraordinary manner employ his Power and Wisdom to do him good: That he will concern himself more for the Happiness of those whose God he declares himself to be, than for others.

Secondly, If we consider the eminent Faith and Obedience of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. *Abraham* left his Country in obedience to God, not knowing

ing whither he was to go. And, which was one of SERM. the most unparallel'd and strange Instances of Faith XXIII. and Obedience that can almost be imagined, he  was willing to have sacrificed his only Son at the command of God. *Isaac* and *Jacob* were also very good Men, and devout Worshipers of the true God, when almost the whole World was sunk into Idolatry and all manner of Impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did design some extraordinary Reward to such faithful Servants of his? especially if we consider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a standing encouragement to all those who in After-ages should follow the Faith, and tread in the Steps of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*.

Thirdly, If we consider the Condition of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* in this World. The Scripture tells us, that *they were Pilgrims and Strangers upon the earth*; had no fixed and settled Habitation, but were forced to wander from one Kingdom and Country to another; that they were exposed to many Hazards and Difficulties, to great Troubles and Afflictions in this World; so that there was no such peculiar Happiness beset them in this Life above the common rate of Men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this Promise, that *God would be their God*. For so far as the Scripture History informs us, and further we cannot know of this matter, *Esau* was as prosperous as *Jacob*; and *Jacob* had a great many more Troubles and afflictions in this Life than *Esau* had. But surely when God calls himself *the God of Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, this signifies that God intended some very peculiar Blessing and Advantage to them above others: Which seeing they did not enjoy in this World, it is very reasonable to believe that one time or other this gracious Declaration and Promise of God was made good to them.

And

SERM. And therefore the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. XXIII. 11. from this very expreffion of God's being faid to *be the God of Abraham* and others, argues that some extraordinary Happinefs was referved for them in another World: And that upon this very ground I am now fpeaking of, namely, becaufe the Condition of *Abraham* and fome others, was not fuch in this World as might feem to answer the fulnefs of this Promise. *All thefe*, fays he, *died in the Faith, not having received the Promifes, but having feen them afar off, and were perfuaded of them, and embraced them, and confefled that they were ftrangers and pilgrims upon the Earth.* From whence he reasons very ftrongly, that thefe good Men might reasonably expect fomewhat better than any thing that had befallen them in this World. *For they*, fays he, *that fay fuch things, declare plainly that they feek a Country; which at the 16th verfe he calls a better Country, that is a heavenly. They that fay fuch things, that is, they who acknowledge themfelves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth, and yet pretend that God hath promifed to be their God, declare plainly that they expect fome reward beyond this Life.* From all which he concludes, *Wherefore God is not afhamed to be called their God, becaufe he hath prepared for them a City*, intimating that if no Happinefs had remained for thefe good Men in another World, this Promise of God's *being their God* would fhamefully have fallen fhort of what it feemed to import, *viz.* fome extraordinary Reward and Bleffing worthy of God to beftow; fomewhat more certain and lafting than any of the Enjoyments of this World; which fince God had abundantly performed to them in the Happinefs of another Life, his Promise to them was made good to the full, and he needed not be *afhamed to be called their God*. But if nothing beyond this Life had been referved for them, that Saying of old *Jacob* towards the conclufion of his Life, *few and evil have the days of the years of my Life been*, would have

have been an eternal Reflection upon the Truth and SERMON.
Faithfulness of him who had so often called himself **XXIII.**
the God of *Jacob*.

But now, because to all this it may be said, that this Promise seems to have been made good to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in this World: For was not God the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, when he took such a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold Dangers they were exposed to by such a special and immediate Providence, *suffering no one to do them harm, but rebuking even Kings for their sakes?* Was not he *Abraham's* God, when he blest him so miraculously with a Son in his old Age, and with so considerable an Estate to leave to him? Was not that Saying of *Jacob* a great acknowledgment of the gracious Providence of God towards him, *With my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands?* And though it must needs be a very cutting Affliction to him to lose his Son *Joseph*, as he thought he had done, yet that was more than recompenced to him in *Joseph's* strange Advancement in *Egypt*, whereby God put into his hands the Opportunity of saving his Father and his whole Family alive. And was not God the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in making them Fathers of so numerous an Offspring, as afterwards became a great Nation: And in giving them a fruitful Land; and bringing them to the quiet Possession of it by such a series of wonderful Miracles? What need then is there of extending this Promise to another World? Doth it not seem abundantly made good in those great Blessings which God bestowed upon them whilst they lived, and afterwards upon their Posterity, in this World? And does not this agree well enough with the first and most obvious Sense of these Words, *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; that is, I am he that was their God while they were alive, and am still the God of their Posterity for

SERM. their fakes ; I say, because the *three* former Confide-
 XXIII. rations are liable to this Objection, which seems
 ~~~~~ wholly to take off the Force of this Argument :  
 Therefore, for the full clearing of this matter, I  
 will add one Consideration more.

*Fourthly* then, we will consider the general Importance of this Promise, abstracting from the particular Persons specified and named in it, *viz. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* ; and that is, that God will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad Men ; he will be *so* the God of good Men as he is not of the Wicked : And some time or other put every good Man into a better and happier Condition than any wicked Man : So that the general importance of this Promise is finally resolved into the Equity and Justice of the Divine Providence.

And unless we suppose another Life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impossible, to reconcile the History of the Old Testament, and the common Appearances of things in this World, with the Justice and Goodness of God's Providence.

It cannot be denied, but that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and several good Men in the Old Testament had many signal Testimonies of the divine Favour vouchsafed to them in this World : But we read likewise of several wicked Men that had as large a share of temporal Blessings. It is very true that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* had great Estates and were petty Princes : But *Pharaoh* was a mighty Prince in comparison of them ; and the Kingdom of *Egypt*, which probably was the first and chief Seat of Idolatry, was at the same time one of the most potent and flourishing Kingdoms in the World : And was blest with a prodigious Plenty, whereby they were furnished with store of Corn, when good *Jacob* and his Family had like to have perished by Famine. 'Tis true, *Joseph* was advanc'd to great Power in *Egypt*, and thereby had the Opportunity  
 of

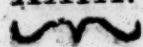


of saving his Father's House, by settling them and SERM. feeding them in *Egypt*: But then it is to be consider'd **XXIII.** again, that this cost them very dear, and their coming thither was the Occasion of a long and cruel Bondage to *Jacob's* Posterity, so that we see that these good Men had no such Blessings, but what were common with them to many others that were Wicked: And the Blessings which God bestowed upon them, had great Abatements by the intermixture of many and sore Afflictions.

It seems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this World towards good Men are so contriv'd, that it may sufficiently appear, to those who wisely consider the Works of God, that they are not neglected by him; and yet that these outward Blessings are so promiscuously dispensed, that no Man can certainly be concluded to be a good Man from any Happiness he enjoys in this Life; And the Prosperity of good Men is usually on purpose so shadowed and mixed with afflictions, as may justly raise their Hopes to the Expectations of a more perfect Happiness and better Reward, than any they meet with in this World.

And if so, then the general importance of this Promise, that *God will be the God of good Men*, must necessarily signify something beyond this World: Because in this World there is not that clear difference universally made between good and bad Men which the Justice of the Divine Providence doth require, and which seems to be intended, in the general Sense of this Promise. For if this Promise (tho' personally made to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*) be intended, as the Scripture tells us it was, for a standing Encouragement to good Men in all Ages, then it must contain in it this general Truth, *that God will sometime or other plentifully reward every good Man*; that is, he will do something far better for him, than for any wicked Man: But if there be no Life after this, it is impossible to reconcile this

SERM. Sense of it with the course of God's Providence, and  
XXIII. with the History of the Bible.



And to make this out fully, and at once, I will only produce that single instance of *Abel* and *Cain*. *Abel* offer'd to God a more excellent Sacrifice than *Cain*, and he had this testimony that he pleased God; which was in effect to declare, that God was the God of *Abel*, and not of *Cain*; so that by virtue of the general importance of this Promise, it might justly be expected, that *Abel's* Condition should have been much better than *Cain's*: But if there be no Happiness after this Life, *Abel's* was evidently much worse. For upon this very account, that he pleased God better, he was killed by *Cain*, who had offer'd to God a slight and contemptuous Offering. And *Cain* lived a long time after, and grew great, and built Cities. Now supposing there were no other Life after this, this must have been a most horrible Example to all Ages, from the beginning of the World to the end of it, and have made Men for ever afraid to please God upon such hard Terms; when they were sure of no other Reward for so doing, but to be oppressed and slain by the hands of the Wicked. So that if this were really the Case, it would puzzle all the Wit and Reason of Mankind to vindicate the Equity and Justice of the Divine Providence, and to rescue it out of the hands of this terrible Objection.

And thus have I, as briefly as I could, endeavour'd to clear to you the force of this Argument used by our Saviour for the Proof of the Resurrection. And have the longer insisted upon it, because at first appearance it seems to be but a very obscure and remote Argument: And yet so much the more necessary to be clear'd, because this in all probability was that very Text upon which the *Jews* in our Saviour's time grounded their belief of a future State, in opposition to the Errors of the *Sadducees*; and which they call'd by way of Eminency the Promise made of  
God

*God unto the Fathers.* As will plainly appear, if we SERM. consider what St. Paul says to this purpose; when XXIII. he appeals so often to the *Pbarisees* for his Agreement with them in this Article of the Resurrection, and likewise in the ground of it from *the promise made of God unto the Fathers*, Acts 24. 14, 15. *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead.* From whence it is clear, that they both grounded their Hope of the Resurrection, upon something written in the Law and the Prophets: And what that was he expresseth more particular, c. 26. v. 6, 7. *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the Promise made of God unto our Fathers; unto which promise our twelve Tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.* By the promise made of God unto the Fathers, he means some Promise made by God to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; for so St. Luke more than once, in his History of the Acts, explains this Phrase of *the God of their Fathers*, Acts 3. 13. *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers*; and c. 7. v. 32. *I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* Now what was the great and famous Promise which God made to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*? Was it not this of being *their God*? So that it was this very Promise upon which St. Paul tells us, the *Jews* grounded their hope of a future State, because they understood it necessarily to signify some Blessing and Happiness beyond this Life.

And now having, I hope, sufficiently cleared this matter, I shall make some improvement of this Doctrine of a future State, and that to these three purposes.



SERM. I. To raise our Minds above this World, and  
 XXIII. the Enjoyments of this present Life. Were but  
 ~~~~~ Men thoroughly convinced of this plain and certain  
 Truth, that there is a vast difference between Time
 and Eternity, between a few Years and everlasting
 Ages: Would we but represent to ourselves what
 Thoughts and Apprehensions dying Persons have of
 this World; how vain and empty a Thing it appears
 to them, how like a Pageant and a Shadow it looks,
 as it passeth away from them, methinks none of
 these things could be a sufficient Temptation to any
 Man to forget God and his Soul; but notwithstanding
 all the delights and pleasures of Sense, we should
 be strangely intent upon the Concernments of an-
 other World, and almost wholly taken up with the
 Thoughts of that vast Eternity which we are ready
 to launch into. For what is there in this World,
 this *waste and howling Wilderness*, this rude and bar-
 barous Country which we are but to pass through,
 which should detain our Affections here, and take
 off our thoughts from our everlasting Habitation;
 from that *better* and that *heavenly Country*, where we
 hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we settle our Affections upon the Enjoyments
 of this present Life, so as to be extremely pleas'd and
 transported with them, and to say in our hearts, *It*
is good for us to be here; if we be excessively griev'd
 or discontented for the want or loss of them, and if
 we look upon our present state in this World any
 otherwise than as a preparation and passage to a bet-
 ter Life; it is a sign that our Faith and Hope of
 the Happiness of another Life is but very weak and
 faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earnest
 believe what we pretend to do concerning these
 things. For did we stedfastly believe and were
 thoroughly persuaded of what our Religion so plain-
 ly declares to us concerning the unspeakable and
 endless Happiness of good Men in another World,
 our Affections would sit more loose to this World,
 and

and our Hopes would raise our Hearts as much SERM.
above these present and sensible things, *as the heavens* XXIII.
are high above the earth; we should value nothing
here below, but as it serves for our present Support
and Passage, or may be made a means to secure and
encrease our future felicity.

2. The Consideration of another Life should quicken our Preparation for that blessed state which remains for us in the other World. This Life is a State of probation and trial. This World is God's School, where immortal Spirits clothed with Flesh are trained and bred up for Eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing, and a matter of slight concernment to us, how we live and demean ourselves in this World; whether we indulge ourselves in *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, or *live soberly, and righteously, and godly* in this present World: No, it is a matter of infinite moment, as much as our Souls and all Eternity are worth. Let us not deceive ourselves; *for as we sow, so shall we reap: If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap everlasting Life. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The righteous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is Peace.*

But the Ungodly are not so: Whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious Life, feels strange Throes and Pangs in his Conscience when he comes to be cast upon a Sick-bed. *The wicked is like the troubled sea* (saith the Prophet) *when it cannot rest*; full of Trouble and Confusion, especially in a dying hour. It is Death to such a Man to look back upon his Life, and a Hell to him to think of Eternity. When his guilty and trembling Soul is ready to leave his Body, and just peeping into the other World, what Horror and Amazement do then seize upon him? What a Rage doth such a Man feel in his Breast, when he seriously considers, that he hath

SERM. been so great a Fool as for the false and imperfect
XXIII. Pleasure of a few Days, to make himself miserable
for ever?

3. Let the Consideration of that unspeakable Reward which God hath promised to good Men at the Resurrection, encourage us to Obedience and a holy Life. We serve a great Prince who is able to promote us to Honour; a most gracious Master who will not let the least Service we do for him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the Apostle makes from his large Discourse of the Doctrine of the Resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. 58. *Wherefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.* Nothing will make Death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to God. *Sleep, saith Solomon, is sweet to the labouring man:* so after a great Diligence and Industry in *working out our own salvation*, and (as it is said of David) *serving our generation according to the will of God*, how pleasant will it be to fall asleep? And as an useful and well-spent Life will make our Death to be sweet, so our Resurrection to be glorious. Whatever Acts of Piety we do to God, or of Charity to Men; whatever we lay out upon the poor, and afflicted, and necessitous, will all be considered by God in the Day of Recompences, and most plentifully rewarded to us.

And surely no consideration ought to be more prevalent to persuade us to Alms-deeds and Charity to the poor, than that of a Resurrection to another Life. Besides the Promises of this Life, which are made to Works of Charity, (and there is not any Grace or Virtue whatsoever, which hath so many and so great Promises of temporal Blessings made to it in Scripture as this Grace of Charity; I say, besides the Promises of this Life,) the great Promise of eternal Life is in Scripture in a more especi-

al manner entail'd upon it. Luke 12. 33. Give SERM.
 alms, saith our Saviour, provide yourselves bags which XXIII.
 wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not;
 and c. 16. v. 9. make to yourselves friends of the
 mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail
 they may receive you into everlasting habitations. And
 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in
 this world, that they be not high-minded, &c. that
 they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to
 distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store
 for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,
 that they may lay hold on eternal life; the word θεμέλιος,
 which our Translation renders *foundation*, accord-
 ing to the common use of it, seems in this place to
 have a more peculiar notion, and to signify the
Security that is given by a *Pledge*, or by an *Instru-*
ment or *Obligation of contract* for the performance
 of *Covenants*. For besides that the Phrase of *lay-*
ing up in store, or *treasuring up a foundation*, seems to
 be a very odd jumbling of Metaphors; this very
 word θεμέλιος almost necessarily requires this notion as
 it is used by the same *Apostle*, in his second Epistle to
 Timothy, chap. 2. v. 19. where it is said, *the foun-*
ation of God stands sure, having this seal, &c. a seal
 being very improper to strengthen a foundation, but
 very fit to confirm a covenant. And then surely it
 ought to be render'd, *the covenant of God remains*
firm, having this seal. And so likewise in the fore-
 mentioned Text, the Sense will be much more easy
 and current if we render it thus, *treasuring up, or*
providing for themselves a good security or pledge a-
gainst the time to come; I add *Pledge*, because that
 anciently was the common way of security for things
 lent: besides that the *Apostle* seems plainly to allude
 to that passage Tobit 4. 8, 9. *If thou hast abundance,*
give alms accordingly, &c. for thou layest up a good
treasure for thyself against the day of necessity θέμα γὰρ
 ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις, *for thou treasurest up for thyself a good*
Pledge; to which this of the *Apostle* exactly answers

ἀποθησαυρίζωντας

SERM. ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμελίον καλόν, *treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good pledge or security, &c.* the Sense however is plain, that the Charity of Alms is one of the best ways of securing our future Happiness.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in Works of Charity, the Scripture tells us, that proportionably to the degrees of our Charity shall be the degrees of our Reward; upon this Consideration the *Apostle* exhorts the *Corinthians* to be liberal in their Charity, 2 Cor. 9. 6. *He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* So that whatever we lay out in this kind, is to the *greatest advantage*, and upon the *best security*; two Considerations which use to be very prevalent with rich Men to lay out their Money.

We certainly do it to the *greatest advantage*; because God will consider the very smallest thing that any of us do in this kind. He that shall give so much as a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward; these last words shall not lose his reward, are a μισθός, and signify much more than they seem to speak, viz. that he shall have a very great Reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewise upon the *best security*; so *Solomon* assures us, Prov. 19. 17. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given he will pay him again:* And we may be confident of our Security where God is Surety; nay, he tells us that in this Case he looks upon himself as Principal, and that whatever we do in ways of Mercy and Charity to the Poor, he takes as done to himself. So our Lord hath told us, Matt. 25. 40. and we shall hear the same from him again out of his own mouth, when he shall appear in his Majesty to judge the World, *Then the King shall answer and say unto them,*

them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done SERM.
it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have XXIII.
done it unto me.

And on the other side, the Scripture no where passeth a more severe Doom upon any sort of Persons, than upon those who have no bowels of Compassion towards their Brethren in distress. That is a fearful Sentence indeed, which the Apostle pronounceth upon such Persons, *James 2. 13. He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy.* And this our Saviour represents to us in a most solemn manner, in that lively description which he makes of the Judgment of the great Day, *Matt. 25. 31, &c. When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, &c. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.* And if this be, as most certainly it is, a true and proper Representation of the Process of that day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, what works of Charity and Mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a Sentence of eternal Happiness or Misery will be pass'd upon us : I was hungry, did ye feed me, or did ye not ? I was naked, did

SERM. did ye cloath me, or did ye not? I was sick and in
 XXIII. Prison, did ye visit me, or did ye not? Not but
 ~~~~~ that all the good or evil of our Lives, in what kind  
 soever, shall then be brought to account; but that  
 our Saviour did chuse to instance particularly, and  
 only in things of this nature, should methinks make  
 a mighty impression upon us, and be a powerful  
 Consideration to oblige us to have a very peculiar  
 regard to Works of Mercy and Charity, and to  
 make sure to *abound in this grace*; that when we  
 shall appear before the great Judge of the World,  
 we may find that Mercy from Him, which we have  
 shew'd to others, and which we shall all undoubtedly  
 stand in need of *in that Day*.

And among all our Acts of Charity, those which  
 are done upon least probability and foresight of their  
 meeting with any recompence in this World, either  
 by way of real requital or of Fame and Reputation,  
 as they are of all other most acceptable to God, so  
 they will certainly have the most ample Reward in  
 another World. So our Lord hath assured us, and  
 accordingly adviseth us, *Luke 14. 12, 13, 14. When  
 thou makest a feast, invite not the rich, because they  
 will recompence thee again: but call the poor, the  
 maimed, the lame and the blind, for they cannot recom-  
 pence thee, but thou shalt be recompenced at the resur-  
 rection of the just.* If we be religious for worldly  
 ends, and serve God, and do good to Men, only in  
 contemplation of some temporal Advantage, we take  
 up with present payment, and cut our selves short of  
 our future Reward: Of such, saith our Lord, *Veri-  
 ly I say unto you, they have their reward*: They are  
 their own security, and have taken care to satisfy  
 themselves, and therefore are to expect nothing from  
 God. But let us who call our selves Christians do  
 something for God, for which we have no hopes to  
 be recompenced in this World; that we may shew  
 that we trust God, and take his Word, and  
 dare venture upon the security of the next World,  
 and

and that recompence which shall be made at the resurrection of the just. SERM.  
XXIII.

And how great and glorious that shall be, our Saviour tells us immediately before my Text, *They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, they can die no more, but they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* If then we be Heirs of such glorious Hopes, and believe that he who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will also be our God: Let us live as it becomes the Candidates of Heaven, and the Children of the Resurrection, and such as verily believe another Life after this, and hope one day to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.

And now that I have represented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to Works of Charity, from the consideration of the blessed Reward we shall certainly meet with at the Resurrection of the Just; I shall crave your patience a little longer, whilst I propose to you one of the fairest Examples of this kind which either this, or perhaps any other Age could easily present us withal: I mean our deceased Brother to whom we are now paying our last solemn Respects, the Reverend Mr. Thomas Gouge; the worthy Son of a reverend and learned Divine of this City, Dr. William Gouge; who was Minister of this Parish of Black Friars six and forty Years; he died in 1653, and still lives in the Memory of many here present.

I must confess that I am no Friend to Funeral Panegyrics, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth and merit in the Party commended to give occasion and foundation for them: In such cases, as Praises are not due to the Dead, so they may be of ill consequence to the Living: Not only by bringing those of our Profession that make a practice of it under the Suspicion of officious and mercenary Flattery, but likewise by encouraging Men to hope that they

SERM. they also may be well spoken of, and even fainted  
 XXIII. when they are dead, though they should have done  
 little or no good in their Life: But yet on the other  
 hand, to commend those excellent Persons, the Vir-  
 tues of whose Lives have been bright and exemplary,  
 is not only a piece of Justice due to the Dead, but  
 an Act of great Charity to the Living, setting a  
 Pattern of well-doing before our Eyes, very apt  
 and powerful to incite and encourage us *to go and do  
 likewise.*

Upon both these Considerations, first to do right  
 to the Memory of so good a Man, and then in hopes  
 that the Example may prove fruitful, and have a con-  
 siderable effect upon others to beget the like Good-  
 ness and Charity in them, I shall endeavour, in as  
 narrow a compass as may be, to give you the just  
 Character of this truly pious and charitable Man,  
 and by setting his Life in a true light, to recommend  
 with all the Advantage I can, so excellent a Pattern  
 to your Imitation.

He was born at *Bow* near *Stratford* in the County  
 of *Middlesex* the 19th day of *September* 1605. He  
 was bred at *Eaton* School, and from thence chosen  
 to *King's* College in *Cambridge*, being about 20 years  
 of Age, in the year 1626. After he had finished  
 the Course of his Studies, and taken his Degrees,  
 he left the *University* and his *Fellowship*, being pre-  
 sented to the Living of *Colsden* near *Croyden* in *Sur-  
 rey*, where he continued about two or three years;  
 and from thence was remov'd to *St. Sepulchres* in  
*London*, in the year 1638; and the year after think-  
 ing fit to change his Condition, match'd into a very  
 worthy and ancient Family, marrying one of the  
 Daughters of Sir *Robert Darcy*.

Being thus settled in this large and populous *Pa-  
 rish*, he did with great Solitude and Pains discharge  
 all the Parts of a vigilant and faithful Minister, for  
 about the Space of 24 Years. For besides his con-  
 stant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very  
 diligent



diligent and charitable in visiting the Sick, and ministering not only spiritual Counsel and Comfort to them, but likewise liberal Relief to the Wants and Necessities of those that were poor and destitute of means to help themselves in that Condition. He did also every Morning throughout the Year catechise in the Church, especially the poorer sort, who were generally most ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be instructed by him, he did once a Week distribute Money among them, not upon a certain Day, but changing it on purpose as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be constantly present; these were chiefly the more aged Poor, who being past Labour, had leisure enough to attend upon this Exercise. As for the other sort of Poor who were able to work for their living, he set them at work upon his own Charge, buying Flax and Hemp for them to spin, and what they spun he took off their Hands, paying them for their Work, and then got it wrought into Cloth, and sold it as he could, chiefly among his Friends, himself bearing the whole Loss. And this was a very wise and well-chosen way of Charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater Charity than if he had given these very Persons freely and for nothing so much as they earned by their Work; because by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby rescued them at once from two of the most dangerous Temptations of this World, *Idleness* and *Poverty*; and by degrees reclaim'd them to a virtuous and industrious course of Life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the Charity of others.

And this course so happily devis'd and begun by Mr. Gouge in his own Parish was I think that which gave the first hint to that worthy and useful Citizen Mr. *Thomas Firmin*, of a much larger design, which hath been prosecuted by him for some Years with that vigour and good success in this City, that many hundreds of poor Children, and others who lived idle

SERM. idle before, unprofitable both to themselves and the  
 XXIII. Publick, are continually maintain'd at Work, and  
 taught to earn their own Livelihood much in the  
 same way: He being, by the generous Assistance and  
 Charity of many worthy and well-disposed Persons  
 of all Ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable Loss  
 and Charge of so vast an Undertaking; and by his  
 own forward Inclination to Charity, and his unwea-  
 ried Diligence and Activity, extraordinarily fitted  
 to sustain and go through the incredible Pains  
 of it.

But to return to our deceased Friend; concerning  
 whom I must content myself to pass over many  
 things worthy to be remembred of him, and to  
 speak only of those Virtues of his which were more  
 eminent and remarkable.

Of his Piety towards God, which is the necessary  
 Foundation of all other Graces and Virtues, I  
 shall only say this, that it was great and quiet with-  
 out Stir and Noise, and much more in Substance  
 and Reality, than in Shew and Ostentation; and  
 did not consist in censuring and finding fault with  
 others, but in the due Care and Government of his  
 own Life and Actions, and *exercising himself conti-  
 nually to have a conscience void of offence toward God  
 and toward men*; in which he was such a Proficient,  
 that even after a long Acquaintance and familiar  
 Conversation with him, it was not easy to observe any  
 thing that might deserve blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar Vir-  
 tues of Conversation, in *Modesty, Humility, Meek-  
 ness, Chearfulness*, and in *Kindness and Charity to-  
 wards all Men*.

So great was his *Modesty*, that it never appear'd  
 either by Word or Action that he put any value up-  
 on himself. This I have often observ'd in him,  
 that the Charities which were procur'd chiefly by his  
 Application and Industry, when he had occasion to  
 give an account of them, he would rather impute to  
 any

any one who had but the least hand and part in the SERM. obtaining of them, than assume any thing of it to XXIII. himself. Another instance of his Modesty was, that when he had quitted his Living of *St. Sepulchres* upon some dissatisfaction about the Terms of Conformity, he willingly forbore preaching, saying there was no need of him here in *London* where there were so many worthy Ministers, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his Life, being better satisfied in some things he had doubted of before, he had License from some of the Bishops to preach in *Wales* in his Progress; which he was the more willing to do, because in some places he saw great need of it, and he thought he might do it with greater Advantage among the poor People, who were the more likely to regard his Instructions, being recommended by his great Charity so well known to them, and of which they had so long had the Experience and Benefit. But where there was no such need, he was very well contented to hear others persuade Men to Goodness, and to practise it himself.

He was *cloathed with humility*, and had in a most eminent degree that *ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, St. Peter says, is in the sight of God of so great price*: So that there was not the least appearance either of Pride or Passion in any of his Words or Actions. He was not only free from Anger and Bitterness, but from all affected Gravity and Moroseness. His Conversation was affable and pleasant; he had a wonderful Serenity of Mind and Evenness of Temper, visible in his very Countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholy, or sad; and for any thing I could discern, after a long and intimate Acquaintance with him, he was upon all Occasions and Accidents perpetually the same; always chearful, and always kind; of a Disposition ready to embrace and oblige all Men; allowing o-



SERM. thers to differ from him, even in Opinions that were  
 XXIII. very dear to him ; and provided Men did but *fear*  
 ~~~~~ *God and work righteousness*, he lov'd them heartily,  
 how distant soever from him in Judgment about
 things less necessary ; in all which he is very worthy
 to be a Pattern for Men of all Perswasions whatso-
 ever.

But that Virtue which of all other shone bright-
 est in him, and was his most proper and peculiar
 Character, was his chearful and unwearied diligence
 in Acts of pious Charity. In this he left far behind
 him all that ever I knew, and, as I said before,
 had a singular Sagacity and Prudence in devising
 the most effectual ways of doing good, and in ma-
 naging and disposing his Charity to the best Purpo-
 ses, and to the greatest Extent ; always, if it were
 possible, making it to serve some end of Piety and
 Religion ; as the Instructions of poor Children in
 the Principles of Religion, and furnishing grown
 Persons that were ignorant with the *Bible* and other
 Books ; strictly obliging those to whom he gave
 them to a diligent reading of them, and when he
 had opportunity exacting of them an account how
 they had profited by them.

In his occasional Alms to the Poor, in which he
 was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them
 was always mingled with good counsel, and as great
 a tenderness and compassion for their Souls as Bodies :
 Which very often attain'd the good effect it was
 likely to have, the one making way for the other
 with so much Advantage, and Men being very apt
 to follow the good advice of those who give them
 in hand so sensible a Pledge and Testimony of their
 good will to them.

This kind of Charity must needs be very expen-
 sive to him, but he had a plentiful Estate settled
 upon him, and left him by his Father, and he laid
 it out as liberally in the most prudent and effectual
 ways of Charity he could think of, and upon such
 Persons

Persons as, all circumstances considered, he judged to be the fittest and most proper Objects of it. SERM. XXIII.

For about nine or ten Years last past he did, as is well known to many here present, almost wholly apply his Charity to *Wales*, because there he judg'd was most occasion for it: And because this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could spare out of his own Estate, but employ'd his whole Time and Pains to excite and engage the Charity of others for his Assistance in it.

And in this he had two excellent Designs: One, to have poor Children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully instructed in the Principles of Religion: The other, to furnish Persons of grown Age, the poor especially, with the necessary helps and means of Knowledge, as the Bible, and other Books of Piety and Devotion, in their own Language; to which end he procur'd the *Church Catechism*, the *Practice of Piety*, and that best of Books the *Whole Duty of Man*, besides several other pious and useful *Treatises*, some of them to be translated into the *Welsh* Tongue, and great numbers of all of them to be printed, and sent down to the chief Towns in *Wales*, to be sold at easy Rates to those that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to those that were not.

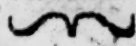
And in both these Designs, through the blessing of God upon his unwearied Endeavours, he found very great success. For by the large and bountiful Contributions, which chiefly by his industry and prudent application were obtain'd from charitable Persons of all Ranks and Conditions, from the *Nobility* and *Gentry* of *Wales* and the neighbouring *Counties*, and several of that *Quality* in and about *London*; from divers of the Right Reverend *Bishops*, and of the *Clergy*; and from that perpetual Fountain of Charity the City of *London*, led on and encourag'd by the most bountiful Example of the Right honourable the *Lord Mayor* and the *Court of Aldermen*; to

SERM. all which he constantly added two thirds of his own
 XXIII. Estate, which as I have been credibly inform'd was
 ~~~~~ two hundred Pounds a Year ; I say by all these together, there were every Year *eight hundred*, sometimes *a thousand* poor Children educated, as I said before ; and by this Example several of the most considerable Towns of *Wales* were excited to bring up at their own Charge the like number of poor Children, in the like manner, and under his Inspection and Care.

He likewise gave very great numbers of the Books above-mentioned both in the *Welch* and *English* Tongues to the poorer Sort, so many as were unable to buy them, and willing to read them. But which was the greatest Work of all, and amounted indeed to mighty Charge, he procured a new and very fair Impression of the Bible and Liturgy of the Church of *England* in the *Welch* Tongue (the former Impression being spent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all *London*,) to the number of eight thousand ; one thousand whereof were freely given to the Poor, and the rest sent to the principal Cities and Towns in *Wales*, to be sold to the Rich at very reasonable and low Rates, viz. at *four Shillings* a-piece well bound and clasped ; which was much cheaper than any *English* Bible was ever sold that was of so fair a Print and Paper : A Work of that Charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way ; and for which this Age, and perhaps the next, will have great cause to thank God on his behalf.

In these good Works he employ'd all his Time and Care and Pains, and his whole Heart was in them ; so that he was very little affected with any thing else, and seldom either minded or knew any thing of the strange Occurrences of this troublesome and busy Age, such as I think are hardly to be parallel'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he scarce ever spoke any thing about them. For this



was the Business he laid to heart, and knowing it to SERM.  
 be so much and so certainly the Will of his Heaven-XXIII.  
 ly Father, it was his Meat and Drink to be doing   
 of it: And the good Success he had in it was a con-  
 tinual Feast to him, and gave him a perpetual Se-  
 renity both of Mind and Countenance. His great  
 Love and Zeal for this Work made all the Pains and  
 Difficulties of it seem nothing to him: He would  
 rise early and sit up late, and continued the same  
 Diligence and Industry to the last, though he was  
 in the threescore and seventeenth Year of his Age.  
 And that he might manage the Distribution of this  
 great Charity with his own Hands, and see the good  
 effect of it with his own Eyes, he always once, but  
 usually twice a Year, at his own Charge travelled  
 over a great part of *Wales*, none of the best Coun-  
 tries to travel in: But for the Love of God and  
 Men he endured all that, together with the Ex-  
 tremity of Heat and Cold, (which in their several  
 Seasons are both very great there) not only with Pa-  
 tience, but with Pleasure. So that all things consi-  
 dered, there have not, since the Primitive Times  
 of Christianity, been many among the Sons of Men  
 to whom that glorious Character of the Son of God  
 might be better applied, that *he went about doing*  
*good*. And *Wales* may as worthily boast of this tru-  
 ly Apostolical Man, as of their famous St. *David*;  
 who was also very probably a good Man, as those  
 times of Ignorance and Superstition went. But his  
 Goodness is so disguised by their fabulous *Legends*  
 and Stories which give us the account of him, that  
 it is not easy to discover it. Indeed ridiculous Mi-  
 racles in abundance are reported of him; as, that up-  
 on occasion of a great number of People resor-  
 ting from all Parts to hear him preach, for the  
 greater Advantage of his being heard, a Moun-  
 tain all on a sudden rose up miraculously under  
 his Feet, and his Voice was extended to that  
 degree that he might be distinctly heard for two

SERM. or three Miles round about. Such phantastical Miracles  
 XXIII. as these make up a great part of his History. And  
 admitting all these to be true (which a wise Man  
 would be loth to do) our departed Friend had that  
 which is much greater, and more excellent than  
 all these, a fervent Charity to God and Men; which  
 is more than to *speak* (as they would make us believe  
 St. David did) *with the Tongue of Men and Angels*, more  
 than to raise or remove Mountains.

And now methinks it is pity so good a Design so  
 happily prosecuted should fall and die with this good  
 Man. And it is now under deliberation, if possible,  
 still to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy  
 and charitable Person pitched upon for that purpose,  
 who is willing to undertake that part which he that  
 is gone performed so well: But this will depend up-  
 on the Continuance of the former Charities, and  
 the Concurrence of those worthy and well-disposed  
 Persons in *Wales* to contribute their part as former-  
 ly; which I persuade my self they will chearfully  
 do. I will add but one thing more concerning our  
 deceas'd Brother, that though he medled not at all  
 in our present Heats and Differences as a Party, ha-  
 ving much better things to mind; yet as a looker  
 on he did very sadly lament them, and for several  
 of the last years of his Life he continued in the  
 Communion of our Church, and, as he himself  
 told me, thought himself obliged in Conscience so  
 to do.

He died in the 77th Year of his Age, *October*,  
*29th*, 1681. It so pleased God that his Death was  
 very sudden; and so sudden, that in all probability  
 he himself hardly perceived it when it happened,  
 for he died in his Sleep; so that we may say of him,  
 as it is said of *David*, *after he had served his*  
*Generation according to the Will of God*, he fell  
 asleep.

I confess that a sudden Death is generally unde-  
 sirable, and therefore with reason we pray against it;  
 because

because so very few are sufficiently prepared for it : **SERM.**  
 But to him, the constant Employment of whose Life **XXIII.**  
 was the best Preparation for Death that was possible, no Death could be sudden ; nay, it was rather a Favour and Blessing to him, because by how much the more sudden, so much the more easy : As if God had designed to begin the Reward of the great Pains of his Life in an easy Death. And indeed it was rather a Translation than Death ; and saying that his Body was left behind, what was said of *Enoch* may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good Man with respect to the suddenness of his Change ; *he walked with God, and was not, for God took him.*

And God grant that we who survive may all of us sincerely endeavour to tread in the Steps of his exemplary Piety and Charity ; of his Labour of Love, his unwearied Diligence and patient Continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging Commendation which he hath already received from the Mouth of our Lord, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

*Now the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you always that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; To whom be Glory for ever, Amen.*



# SERMON XXIV.

Preached at the Funeral of the Reverend *Benjamin Whichcot*, D. D.  
May 24, 1683.

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2 COR. V. 6.

*Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body we are absent from the Lord.*

SERM.  
XXIV.

**T**HESE Words contain one of the chief grounds of encouragement which the Christian Religion gives us against the Fear of Death. For our clearer understanding of them it will be requisite to consider the *Context*, looking back as far as the beginning of the *Chapter* where the *Apostle* pursues the Argument of the foregoing *Chapter*, which was to comfort and encourage Christians under their Afflictions and Sufferings, from this Consideration, that these did but prepare the way for a greater and more glorious Reward; *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And suppose the worst, that these Sufferings should extend to Death, there is comfort for us likewise in this Case, *ver. 1. of this Chapter, For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, &c. If our earthly house of this tabernacle;* he calls our Body an *Earthly House*, and that we may not look upon it as a certain Abode and fixed Habitation, he doth by way of Correction of himself add, that it is but a *Tabernacle*

*Tabernacle* or Tent which must shortly be taken down : And when it is, *we shall have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* SERM. XXIV. This is a description of our heavenly Habitation, in opposition to our earthly House or Tabernacle ; It is *a Building of God*, not like those Houses or Tabernacles which Men build, and which are liable to decay and dissolution, to be taken down, or to fall down of themselves, for such are those Houses of Clay which we dwell in, *whose foundations are in the dust*, but an Habitation prepared by God himself, *a House not made with Hands* ; that which is the immediate Work of God, being in Scripture opposed to that which is made with Hands, and effected by human concurrence, and by natural means : And being the immediate Work of God, as it is excellent, so it is lasting and durable, which no earthly thing is : *eternal in the heavens*, that is eternal and heavenly.

*For in this we groan earnestly* ; that is, while we are in this Body we groan by reason of the pressures and afflictions of it. *Desiring to be clothed upon with our House which is from Heaven : If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked, desiring to be clothed upon* ; that is, we could wish not to put off these Bodies, not to be strip'd of them by Death, but to be of the number of those who at the coming of our Lord without the putting off these Bodies shall be changed and clothed upon with their House which is from Heaven, and without dying be invested with those spiritual and glorious and heavenly Bodies, which Men shall have at the Resurrection.

This I doubt not is the *Apostle's* meaning in these Words ; in which he speaks according to a common Opinion among the Disciples, grounded (as St. John tells us) upon a mistake of our Saviour's Words concerning him, *If I will that he tarry till I come* : upon which St. John tells us, that *there went a saying among the Brethren, that that Disciple should not die* ;  
that

SERM. that is, that he should live till Christ's coming to  
 XXIV. Judgment, and then be changed; and consequent-  
 ly that Christ would come to Judgment before the  
 end of that Age. Suitable to this common Opini-  
 on among Christians, the *Apostle* here says, *in this*  
*we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our*  
*House which is from Heaven, if so be that being clothed*  
*we shall not be found naked.* It hath puzzled Interpre-  
 ters what to make of this Passage, and well it might;  
 for whatever be meant by being clothed, how can  
 they that are clothed be found naked? but I think  
 it is very clear that our *Translators* have not attained  
 the true Sense of this Passage, Εἶπε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, ὃ γυμνοὶ  
 εὐρεθυσόμεθα, which is most naturally rendred thus, *If*  
*so be we shall be found clothed, and not naked:* That  
 is, if the coming of Christ shall find us in the Body  
 and not divested of it; if at Christ's coming to  
 Judgment we shall be found alive and not dead.  
 And then the Sense of the whole is very clear and  
 current; we are desirous to be clothed upon with our  
 House from Heaven (that is, without spiritual and  
 immortal Bodies) if so be it shall so happen that at  
 the coming of Christ we shall be found alive in these  
 Bodies, and not strip'd of them before by Death.  
 And then it follows, *For we that are in this taber-*  
*nacle do groan being burthened* (that is, with the Afflic-  
 tions and Pressures of this Life) *not that we would be*  
*unclothed* (that is, not that we desire by Death to be  
 divested of these Bodies) *but clothed upon* (that is, if  
 God see it good we had rather be found alive, and  
 changed, and without putting off these Bodies have  
 immortality as it were superinduced) *that so Mortali-*  
*ty might be swallowed up of Life.* The plain Sense is,  
 that he rather desires (if it may be) to be of the  
 number of those who shall be found alive at the  
 coming of Christ, and have this mortal and corrup-  
 tible Body while they are clothed with it, changed  
 into a spiritual and incorruptible Body, without the  
 Pain and Terror of dying: Of which immediate



Translation into Heaven without the painful Divorce SERM.  
of Soul and Body by Death, *Enoch* and *Elias* were XXIV.  
Examples in the Old Testament.

It follows, *ver. 5.* *Now he that hath wrought for us the self-same thing is God* : That is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this glorious Change : *who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.* The Spirit is frequently in Scripture called the *Witness*, and *Seal*, and *Earnest* of our future Happiness, and blessed Resurrection or Change of these vile and earthly Bodies into spiritual and heavenly Bodies. For as the Resurrection of Christ from the Dead by the Power of the Holy Ghost, is the great Proof and Evidence of Immortality : So the Spirit of him that raised up *Jesus* from the Dead dwelling in us, is the Pledge and Earnest of our Resurrection to an immortal Life.

From all which the *Apostle* concludes in the Words of the *Text*, *Therefore we are always confident*, that is, we are always of good courage against the fear of Death, *knowing that whilst we are at home in the Body we are absent from the Lord*, ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδημοῦντες, which may better be rendred *whilst we converse or sojourn in the Body*, than *whilst we are at Home* ; Because the Design of the *Apostle* is to shew that the Body is not our House but our Tabernacle ; and that whilst we are in the Body we are not at Home, but Pilgrims and Strangers. And this notion the *Heathens* had of our present Life and Condition in this World. *Ex-vita discedo* (saith *Tully*) *tanquam ex hospitio non tanquam ex domo ; commorandi enim natura diversorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit.* *We go out of this Life as it were from an Inn, and not from our Home ; Nature having designed it to us as a Place to sojourn but not to dwell in.*

*We are absent from the Lord* ; that is, we are detained from the blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God, and kept out of the Possession of that Happiness which makes Heaven.

So

SERM. So that the *Apostle* makes an immediate oppositi-  
 XXIV. on between our continuance in the Body and our  
 W blifsful Enjoyment of God; and lays it down for a  
 certain Truth, that whilst we remain in the Body  
 we are detained from our Happiness, and that so  
 soon as ever we leave the Body we shall be ad-  
 mitted into it, *knowing that whilst we converse in*  
*the Body we are absent from the Lord.* And ver.  
 8. *We are willing rather to be absent from the Bo-*  
*dy, and present with the Lord;* intimating that so soon  
 as we quit these Bodies we shall be admitted to the  
 blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God.

My design from this *Text* is to draw some useful  
*Corollaries* or Conclusions from this Assertion of the  
*Apostle, That whilst we are in these Bodies we are de-*  
*tain'd from our Happiness; and that so soon as ever we*  
*depart out of them we shall be admitted to the Possession*  
*and Enjoyment of it.* And they are these,

1. The Assertion shews us the vanity and falshood  
 of that Opinion, or rather Dream, concerning the  
 Sleep of the Soul from the time of Death till the  
 general Resurrection. This is chiefly grounded up-  
 on that frequent Metaphor in Scripture by which  
 Death is resembled to Sleep, and those that are dead  
 are said to be fallen asleep. But this Metaphor is  
 no where in Scripture, that I know of, applied to  
 the Soul, but to the Body resting in the Grave in or-  
 der to its being awakened and raised up at the Re-  
 surrection. And that it is frequently used with ex-  
 press reference to the Body, *Dan. 12. 2. Many of*  
*them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake.*  
*Matth. 27. 52. And the Graves were opened, and ma-*  
*ny Bodies of Saints which slept arose.* *Acts 13. 36.*  
*David after he had served his own Generation by the*  
*Will of God fell on sleep, and was laid to his Fathers,*  
*and saw Corruption;* which surely can no otherwise  
 be understood than of his Body. *1 Cor. 5. 21. Now*  
*is Christ risen from the Dead, and become the First-*  
*fruits of them that slept;* that is, the Resurrection of  
 his

his Body is the Earnest and Assurance that ours also SERM.  
shall be raised. And ver. 51. *We shall not all sleep, but* XXIV.  
*shall all be changed*; where the *Apostle* certainly speaks  
both of the Death and Change of these corruptible  
Bodies. 1 *Thessal.* 4. 14. *If we believe that Jesus*  
*died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus*  
*shall God bring with him*: That is, the Bodies of those  
that died in the Lord shall be raised, and accompa-  
ny him at his coming. So that it is the Body which  
is said in Scripture to sleep, and not the Soul. For  
that is utterly inconsistent with the *Apostle's* Assertion  
here in the *Text*, that *while we are in the Body we are*  
*absent from the Lord*, and that so soon as we depart  
out of the Body we shall be present with the Lord.  
For surely *to be with the Lord* must signify a state of  
Happiness, which Sleep is not, but only of Inacti-  
vity: Besides, that the *Apostle's* Argument would be  
very flat, and it would be but a cold Encourage-  
ment against the Fear of Death, that so soon as we  
are dead we shall fall asleep and become insensible.  
But the *Apostle* useth it as an Argument why we  
should be willing to die as soon as God pleaseth, and  
the sooner the better, because so soon as we quit these  
Bodies we shall be present with the Lord, that is,  
admitted to the blissful Sight and Enjoyment of  
him: And while we abide in the Body we are de-  
tained from our Happiness: But if our Souls shall  
sleep as well as our Bodies till the general Resur-  
rection, it is all one whether we continue in the Body  
or not, as to any Happiness we shall enjoy in the  
mean time, which is directly contrary to the main  
Scope of the *Apostle's* Argument.

2. This Assertion of the *Apostle's* doth perfectly  
conclude against the feigned Purgatory of the  
Church of *Rome*; which supposeth the far greater  
number of true and faithful Christians, of those who  
die in the Lord, and have obtained eternal Redemp-  
tion by him from Hell, not to pass immediately into a  
state of Happiness, but to be detained in the Suburbs  
of



SERM. of Hell in extremity of Torment (equal to that of  
 XXIV. Hell for Degree, though not for Duration) till their  
 ~~~~~ Souls be purged, and the Guilt of temporal Punishments, which they are liable to, be some way or other paid off and discharged. They suppose indeed some very few holy Persons (especially those who suffer Martyrdom) to be so perfect at their departure out of the Body as to pass immediately into Heaven, because they need no Purgation : But most Christians they suppose to die so imperfect that they stand in need of being purged : and according to the Degree of their Imperfection are to be detained a shorter or a longer time in Purgatory.

But now, besides that there is no *Text* in *Scripture* from whence any such State can probably be concluded (as is acknowledged by many learned Men of the Church of *Rome*) and even that *Text* which they have most insisted upon (*they shall be saved, yet so as by Fire*) is given up by them as insufficient to conclude the thing : *Estius* is very glad to get off it, by saying there is nothing in it against Purgatory : Why ? No-body pretends that : but we might reasonably expect that there should be something for it in a *Text* which hath been so often produced and urged by them for the proof of it. I say, besides that there is nothing in *Scripture* for Purgatory, there are a great many things against it, and utterly inconsistent with it. In the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, which was designed to represent to us the different States of good and bad Men in another World, there is not the least Intimation of Purgatory, but that good Men pass immediately into a State of Happiness, and bad Men into a Place of Torment. And St. *John*, Rev. 14. 13. pronounceth all that die in the Lord happy, because *they rest from their Labours* ; which they cannot be said to do who are in a state of great Anguish and Torment, as those are supposed to be who are in Purgatory.

But

But above all, this reasoning of St. *Paul* is utterly inconsistent with any imagination of such a State. SERM. XXIV.
 For he encourageth all Christians in general against the Fear of Death from the Consideration of that happy State they should immediately pass into, by being admitted into the Presence of God; which surely is not Purgatory. *We are of good courage* (says he) *and willing rather to be absent from the Body*: And great reason we should be so, if so soon as we leave the Body we are present with the Lord. But no Man sure would be glad to leave the Body to go into a Place of exquisite and extreme Torment, which they tell us is the Case of most Christians when they die. And what can be more unreasonable, than to make the *Apostle* to use an Argument to comfort all Christians against the Fear of Death, which concerns but very few in comparison? So that if the *Apostle's* Reasoning be good, that while we are in this Life we are detained from our Happiness, and so soon as we depart this Life we pass immediately into it, and therefore Death is desirable to all good Men: I say, if this Reasoning be good, it is very clear that St. *Paul* knew nothing of the Doctrine now taught in the Church of *Rome* concerning Purgatory; because that is utterly inconsistent with what he expressly asserts in this *Chapter*, and quite takes away the force of his whole Argument.

3. To encourage us against the Fear of Death. And this is the Conclusion which the *Apostle* makes from this Consideration. *Therefore* (says he) *we are of good courage, knowing that whilst we converse in the Body we are absent from the Lord*. There is in us a natural Love of Life, and a natural Horror and Dread of Death; so that our Spirits are apt to shrink at the thoughts of the approach of it. But this Fear may very much be mitigated, and even over-ruled by Reason and the Considerations of Religion. For Death is not so dreadful in itself, as with regard to the Consequences of it: And those will

SERM. will be as we are; comfortable and happy to the
XXIV. Good, but dismal and miserable to the Wicked.

So that the only true Antidote against the Fear of Death is the Hopes of a better Life; and the only firm Ground of these Hopes is the Mercy of God in *Jesus Christ*, upon our due Preparation for another World by Repentance and a holy Life. For the Sting of Death is Sin; and when that is taken away the Terror and Bitterness of Death is past. And then Death is so far from being dreadful, that in reason it is extremely desirable; because it lets us into a better State, such as only deserves the Name of Life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam è carcere evolaverunt: vestra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors est.* They truly live (could a Heathen say) who have made their Escape out of this Prison of the Body: but that which men commonly call Life is rather Death than Life. To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy; and that we shall never be till we are gone beyond the Grave.

4. This Consideration should comfort us under the Loss and Death of Friends, which certainly is one of the greatest Grievances and Troubles of human Life. For if they be fit for God, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was possible for them to have been in this World; and the Trouble of their Absence from us is fully ballanced by their being present with the Lord. For why should we lament the End of that Life which we are assured is the Beginning of Immortality? One reason of our Trouble for the Loss of Friends is because we loved them: But it is no sign of our Love to them to grudge and repine at their Happiness. But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer: Be it so; yet why should we be troubled that they are happy sooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the Thought of this is grievous: But yet the Consideration of their being parted for a while is not near so sad, as the
Hope

Hopes of a happy Meeting again, never to be parted SERM.
 any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that XXIV.
 the greater our Love to them was, the less should
 be our Grief for them, when we consider that they
 are happy, and that they are safe ; past all Storms,
 all the Troubles and Temptations of this Life, and
 out of the reach of all Harm and Danger for ever.
 But though the Reason of our Duty in this case be
 very plain, yet the Practice of it is very difficult ;
 and when all is said, natural Affection will have its
 course : And even after our Judgment is satisfied, it
 will require some time to still and quiet our Passi-
 ons.

5. This Consideration should wean us from the
 Love of Life : And make us not only contented,
 but willing and glad to leave this World, whenever
 it shall please God to call us out of it. This Inse-
 parable the *Apostle* makes, *ver. 8. We are confident, I*
say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and
present with the Lord. Though there were no State
 of Immortality after this Life, yet methinks we
 should not desire to live always in this World. *Ha-*
bet natura (says *Tully*) *ut aliarum rerum, sic vivendi mo-*
rum : As nature hath set bounds and measures to other
things, so likewise to Life ; of which Men should
 know when they have enough, and not covet so much
 of it till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there
 were no other inconvenience in a long life, this is a
 great one, that in a long course of time we un-
 avoidably see a great many things which we would
 not ; our own Misfortunes and the Calamities of o-
 thers ; publick Confusions and Distractions ; the loss
 of Friends and Relations, or which is worse, their
 Misery, or which is worst of all, their Miscarriage :
 Especially, a very infirm and tedious Old-age is ve-
 ry undesirable : For who would desire to live long
 uneasie to himself, and troublesome to others ? It is
 time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot
 live with the Good-will even of our Friends : When

SERM. those who ought to love us best think much that we
 XXIV. live so long, and can hardly forbear to give us broad
 Signs that they are weary of our Company. In such
 a case a Man would almost be contented to die out
 of Civility; and not chuse to make any long stay
 where he sees that his Company is not acceptable.
 If we think we can be welcome to a better Place,
 and to a more delightful Society, why should we
 desire to thrust our selves any longer upon an ill-na-
 tur'd World, upon those who have much ado to re-
 frain from telling us that our Room is better than
 our Company?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous
 Old-age, and the Taper of Life burns clear in them
 to the last: Their Understandings are good, their
 Memories and Senses tolerable, their Humour plea-
 sant, and their Conversation acceptable, and their
 Relations kind and respectful to them. But this is a
 rare Felicity, and which seldom happens but to
 those who have lived wisely and virtuously, and by
 a religious and regular course of Life have preserved
 some of their best Spirits to the last, and have not
 by Vice and Extravagance drawn off Life to the
 Dregs, and left nothing to be enjoy'd but Infirmities
 and ill Humours, Guilt and Repentance, but on the
 contrary have prudently laid up some considerable
 Comforts and Supports for themselves against this
 gloomy Day; having stored their Minds with Wis-
 dom and Knowledge, and taken care to secure to
 themselves the comfortable reflections of an useful
 and well-spent Life, and the Favour and Loving-
 kindness of God, which is better than Life itself.
 But generally the Extremities of Old-age are very
 peevish and querulous, and declining and falling
 back to the weak and helpless condition of Infancy
 and Childhood. And yet less care is commonly ta-
 ken to please aged Persons, and less kindness shew-
 ed to them (unless it be in expectation of receiving
 greater from them) than to Children: because these
 are

are cherished in hopes, the others in despair of their SERM.
growing better. So that if God see it good it is XXIV.
not desirable to live to try Nature, and the kindness
and good-will of our Relations to the utmost.

Nay there is Reason enough why we should be well contented to die in any Age of our Life. If we are young we have tasted the best of it: If in our middle Age, we have not only enjoyed all that is desirable of Life, but almost all that is tolerable: If we are old, we are come to the dregs of it, and do but see the same things over and over again, and continually with less pleasure.

Especially if we consider the Happiness from which we are all this while detained. This Life is but our Infancy and Childhood in comparison of the manly Pleasures and Enjoyments of the other State. And why should we desire to be always Children; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer? In this Sense that high Expression of the *Poet*, is true.

— *Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,
Quàm sit dulce mori.*

*The Gods conceal from men the sweetness of dying, to
make them patient and contented to live.*

This Life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make sure to live well and there is no need of living long. To the purpose of Preparation for another World, the best Life is the longest. Some live a great pace, and by continual Diligence and Industry in serving God and doing good, do really dispatch more of the Business of Life in a few Years, than others do in a whole Age; who go such a fauntering Pace towards Heaven, as if they were in no haste to get thither. But if we were always prepared we should rejoyce at the prospect of our End; as those who have been long tost at Sea are overjoyed at the sight of Land.

SERM. I have now done with my *Text*, but have another
 XXIV. Subject to speak of ; that excellent Man in whose
 Place I now stand ; whom we all knew, and whom
 all that knew him well did highly esteem
 and reverence. He was born in *Shropshire* of
 a worthy and ancient Family, the 11th of *March*,
 1609. was the sixth Son of his Father : And being
 bred up to Learning, and very capable of it, was
 sent to the University of *Cambridge*, and planted
 there in *Emanuel-College* ; where he was chosen
 Fellow, and was an excellent Tutor and Instruc-
 tor of Youth, and bred up many Persons of Qua-
 lity, and others, who afterwards proved useful
 and eminent ; as many perhaps as any Tutor of that
 time.

About the Age of four or five and thirty he was
 made Provost of *King's-College* ; where he was a
 most vigilant and prudent Governor, a great Encou-
 rager of Learning and good Order, and by his care-
 ful and wise Management of the Estate of the Col-
 lege, brought it into a very flourishing Condition,
 and left it so.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to
 dissemble it) that here he possess'd another Man's
 Place, who by the Iniquity of the Times was wrong-
 fully ejected ; I mean Dr. *Collins*, the famous and
 learned Divinity-Professor of that University. Du-
 ring whose Life (and he lived many Years after) by
 the free Consent of the College, there were two
 Shares out of the common Dividend allotted to the
 Provost, one whereof was constantly paid to Dr.
Collins, as if he had been still Provost. To this
 Dr. *Whichcot* did not only give his Consent (without
 which the thing could not have been done) but was
 very forward for the doing of it, tho' hereby he did
 not only considerably lessen his own Profit, but like-
 wise incur no small Censure and Hazard as the
 Times then were. And lest this had not been Kind-
 ness

ness enough to that worthy Person, whose place he possessed, in his last Will he left his Son, Sir John Collins, a Legacy of one hundred Pounds. SERM. XXIV.

And as he was not wanting either in Respect or real Kindness to the rightful Owner, so neither did he stoop to do any thing unworthy to obtain that Place ; for he never took the *Covenant* : And not only so, but by the particular Friendship and Interest which he had in some of the chief of the *Visitors*, he prevailed to have the greatest part of the Fellows of that College exempted from that Imposition ; and preserved them in their Places by that means. And to the Fellows that were ejected by the *Visitors*, he likewise freely consented that their full Dividend for that Year should be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among these was the reverend and ingenious Dr. *Charles Mason* ; upon whom after he was ejected the College did confer a good Living, which then fell in their Gift, with the Consent of the Provost, who, knowing him to be a worthy Man, was contented to run the hazard of the Displeasure of those Times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon such Terms to be in a Capacity to do good in bad Times.

For, besides his Care of the College, he had a very great and good Influence upon the University in general. Every Lord's-day in the Afternoon, for almost twenty Years together, he preached in *Trinity-Church*, where he had a great number, not only of the young Scholars, but of those of greater standing and best repute for Learning in the University his constant and attentive Auditors : And in those wild and unsettled Times contributed more to the forming of the Students of that University to a sober Sense of Religion than any Man in that Age.

After he left *Cambridge* he came to *London*, and was chosen Minister of *Black-Friars*, where he con-

SERM. tinu'd till the dreadful Fire: And then retired him-
 XXIV. self to a Donative he had at *Milton* near *Cambridge*;
 where he preached constantly, and relieved the Poor,
 and had their Children taught to read at his own
 Charge, and made up Differences among the Neigh-
 bours. Here he staid till by the Promotion of the
 reverend Dr. *Wilkins* his Predecessor in this Place,
 to the Bishoprick of *Chester*, he was by his Interest
 and Recommendation presented to this Church.
 But during the building of it, upon the Invitation
 of the Court of Aldermen, in the Mayoralty of
 Sir *William Turner*, he preached before that honoura-
 ble Auditory at *Guild-Hall* Chappel every *Sunday* in
 the Afternoon, with great Acceptance and Approba-
 tion, for about the space of seven Years.

When his Church was built, he bestowed his Pains
 here twice a Week, where he had the general Love
 and Respect of his Parish; and a very considerable
 and judicious Auditory, though not very numerous
 by reason of the Weakness of his Voice in his de-
 clining Age.

It pleased God to bless him, as with a plentiful
 Estate, so with a charitable Mind: which yet was
 not so well known to many, because in the disposal
 of his Charity he very much affected Secrecy. He
 frequently bestowed his Alms (as I am informed by
 those who best knew) on poor House-keepers dis-
 abled by Age or Sicknes to support themselves, think-
 ing those to be the most proper Objects of it. He
 was rather frugal in expence upon himself, that so he
 might have wherewithal to relieve the Necessities of
 others.

And he was not only charitable in his Life, but in
 a very bountiful manner at his Death; bequeathing
 in pious and charitable Legacies to the value of a
 thousand Pounds. To the Library of the University
 of *Cambridge* fifty Pounds: And of *King's-College*
 one hundred Pounds: And of *Emanuel-College* twenty
 Pounds:

Pounds: To which College he had been a consider-^{SERM.}
able Benefactor before; having founded there seven-^{XXIV.}
ral Scholarships to the value of a thousand Pounds,
out of a Charity with the disposal whereof he was
intrusted, and which not without great Difficulty and
Pains he at last recovered.

To the Poor of the several Places where his Estate
lay, and where he had been Minister, he gave above
one hundred Pounds.

Among those who had been his Servants, or were
so at his Death, he disposed in Annuities and Le-
gacies in Money to the value of above three hun-
dred Pounds.

To other charitable Uses and among the poorer of
his Relations, above three hundred Pounds.

To every one of his Tenants he left a Legacy ac-
cording to the proportion of the Estate they held, by
way of remembrance of him: And to one of them
that was gone much behind he remitted in his Will
seventy Pounds. And as became his great Good-
ness, he was ever a remarkably kind Landlord, for-
giving his Tenants, and always making Abatements
to them for hard years or any other accidental Losses
that happened to them.

I must not omit the wise Provision he made in his
Will to prevent Law-suits among the Legatees, by
appointing two or three Persons of greatest Prudence
and Authority among his Relations final Arbitrators
of all Differences that should arise.

Having given this Account of his last Will, I
come now to the sad part of all: Sad I mean to us,
but happiest to him. A little before *Easter* last he
went down to *Cambridge*: Where upon taking a
great Cold, he fell into a Distemper which in a few
days put a period to his Life. He died in the House
of his ancient and most learned Friend Dr. *Cudworth*,
Master of *Christ's-College*. During his Sickn^{ss} he
had a constant calmness and serenity of Mind: And
under all his bodily weakness poss^{ess}ed his Soul in great
Patience.

SERM. Patience. After the Prayers for the Visitation of XXIV. the Sick (which he said were excellent Prayers) had been used, he was put in mind of receiving the Sacrament; to which he answered, that he most readily embraced the Proposal: And after he had received it, said to Dr. Cudworth, I heartily thank you for this most Christian Office: I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this Sacrament; adding this pious Ejaculation, *The Lord fulfil all his Declarations and Promises, and pardon all my Weaknesses and Imperfections.* He disclaimed all Merit in himself, and declared that whatever he was, he was through the Grace and Goodness of God in *Jesus Christ*. He expressed likewise great dislike of the Principles of Separation, and said, *he was the more desirous to receive the Sacrament, that he might declare his full Communion with the Church of Christ all the World over.* He disclaimed Popery, and, as things of near affinity with it, or rather Parts of it, *all Superstition and Usurpation upon the Consciences of Men.*

He thanked God, *that he had no Pain in his Body, nor Disquiet in his Mind.*

Towards his last he seemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this State; not for any Pains he felt in himself, but for the Trouble he gave his Friends: Saying to one of them who had with great Care attended him all along in his Sickness, *My dear Friend, thou hast taken a great deal of Pains to uphold a crazy Body, but it will not do: I pray thee give me no more Cordials; for why shouldst thou keep me any longer out of that happy State to which I am going? I thank God I hope in his Mercy, that it shall be well with me.*

And herein God was pleased particularly to answer those devout and well-weighed Petitions of his, which he frequently used in his Prayer before Sermon, which I shall set down in his own Words, and I doubt not those that were his constant Hearers do well remember them, *And superadd this, O Lord, to*

all the Grace and Favour which thou hast shewn us all SERM.
 along in Life, not to remove us hence but with all ad- XXIV.
 vantage for Eternity, when we shall be in a due Prepa-
 ration of Mind, in a holy Constitution of Soul, in a
 perfect renunciation of the guise of this mad and sinful
 World, when we shall be entirely resigned up to thee,
 when we shall have clear Acts of Faith in God by Jesus
 Christ, high and reverential Thoughts of thee in our
 Minds, enlarged and inflamed Affections towards thee,
 &c. And whensoever we shall come to leave this World,
 which will be when thou shalt appoint (for the issues of
 Life and Death are in thy hands) afford us such a migh-
 ty Power and Presence of thy good Spirit, that we may
 have solid Consolation in believing, and avoid all Con-
 sternation of Mind, all Doubtfulness and Uncertainty
 concerning our everlasting Condition, and at length de-
 part in the Faith of God's Eleſt, &c. Mark the per-
 fect Man, and behold the Upright; for the end of
 that Man is Peace.

Thus you have the short History of the Life and
 Death of this eminent Person; whose just Character
 cannot be given in few Words, and time will not
 allow me to use many. To be able to describe him
 aright it were necessary one should be like him:
 For which reason I must content myself with a very
 imperfect Draught of him.

I shall not insist upon his exemplary Piety and De-
 votion towards God, of which his whole Life was
 one continued Testimony. Nor will I praise his
 profound Learning, for which he was justly had in
 so great Reputation. The moral Improvements of
 his Mind, a God-like Temper and Disposition (as he
 was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aspired af-
 ter; that universal Charity and Goodness, which he
 did continually preach and practise.

His Conversation was exceeding kind and affable,
 grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He
 was slow to declare his Judgment, and modest in
 delivering it. Never passionate, never peremptory:
So

SERM. So far from imposing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And tho' he had a most profound and well-poisd Judgment, yet was he of all Men I ever knew the most patient to hear others differ from him, and the most easy to be convinced when good Reason was offered; and, which is seldom seen, more apt to be favourable to another Man's Reason than his own.

Studious and inquisitive Men commonly at such an Age (at forty or fifty at the utmost) have fixed and settled their Judgments in most Points, and as it were made their *last Understanding*; supposing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be said on all sides of things; and after that they grow positive and impatient of Contradiction, thinking it a disparagement to them to alter their Judgment: But our deceased Friend was so wise, as to be willing to learn to the last; knowing that no Man can grow wiser without some Change of his Mind, without gaining some Knowledge which he had not, or correcting some Error which he had before.

He had attained so perfect a mastery of his Passions, that for the latter and greatest part of his Life he was hardly ever seen to be transported with Anger: and as he was extremely careful not to provoke any Man, so not to be provoked by any; using to say, *If I provoke a Man he is the worse for my Company, and if I suffer myself to be provoked by him I shall be the worse for his.*

He very seldom reprov'd any Person in Company otherwise than by Silence, or some Sign of Uneasiness, or some very soft and gentle Word; which yet from the Respect Men generally bore to him did often prove effectual. For he understood human Nature very well, and how to apply himself to it in the most easy and effectual ways.

He was a great Encourager and kind Director of young Divines: And one of the most candid Hearers of Sermons, I think, that ever was: So that tho'

all Men did mightily reverence his Judgment, yet SERM.
no Man had reason to fear his Censure. He never XXIV.
spake well of himself, nor ill of others: making
good that Saying of *Pansa* in *Tully*, *Neminem alteri-*
us, qui suæ consideret virtuti, invidere; that no man
is apt to envy the Worth and Virtues of another, that
hath any of his own to trust to.

In a word, he had all those Virtues, and in a
high degree, which an excellent Temper, great Con-
sideration, long Care and Watchfulness over him-
self, together with the Assistance of God's Grace
(which he continually implored, and mightily re-
lied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he ex-
celled in the Virtues of Conversation, Humanity,
and Gentleness, and Humility, a prudent and peace-
able and reconciling Temper. And God knows we
could very ill at this time have spared such a Man;
and have lost from among us as it were so much Balm
for the healing of the Nation, which is now so mise-
rably rent and torn by those Wounds which we mad-
ly give our selves. But since God hath thought good
to deprive us of him, let his Virtues live in our
Memory, and his Example in our Lives. Let us
endeavour to be what he was, and we shall one day
be what he now is, of blessed Memory on Earth,
and happy for ever in Heaven.

And now methinks the Consideration of the Ar-
gument I have been upon, and of that great Exam-
ple that is before us, should raise our Minds above
this World, and fix them upon the Glory and Hap-
piness of the other. Let us then begin Heaven
here, in the Frame and Temper of our Minds; in
our heavenly Affections and Conversation; in a due
Preparation for, and in earnest Desires and Breath-
ings after that blessed State which we firmly believe
and assuredly hope to be one day possessed of: When
we shall be removed out of this Sink of Sin and
Sorrows into the Regions of Bliss and Immorta-
lity: Where we shall meet all those worthy and ex-
cellent

SERM. cellent Persons who are gone before us, and whose
 XXIV. Conversation was so delightful to us in this World ;
 and will be much more so to us in the other ; when
 the Spirits of just Men shall be made perfect, and
 shall be quit of all those Infirmities which did attend
 and lessen them in this mortal State ; when we shall
 meet again with our dear Brother, and all those
 good Men whom we knew in this World, and with
 the Saints and excellent Persons of all Ages, to en-
 joy their blessed Friendship and Society for ever in
 the Presence of the blessed God, where is *fullness of*
Joy, at whose Right-hand are Pleasures for evermore.

In a firm persuasion of this happy State, let every
 one of us say with *David*, and with the same Arden-
 cy of Affection that he did, *As the Hart panteth af-*
ter the Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O
God ; My Soul thirsteth for God ; for the living God ;
O when shall I come and appear before God ? That so
 the Life which we now live in this World may be a
patient continuance in well-doing in a joyful expectation
of the blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the
great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ : To whom
 with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all Honour
 and Glory, now and for ever.

Now the God of Peace who brought again from the
dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the
Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant,
make us perfect in every good work to do his Will ;
working in us always that which is well-pleasing in his
Sight, through Jesus Christ ; to whom be Glory for
ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXV.

A Persuasive to frequent Communion.

I COR. xi. 26, 27, 28.

For as oft as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.

MY Design in this Argument is, from the SERM. Consideration of the Nature of this Sa-XXV. crament of the *Lord's Supper*, and of the perpetual Use of it to the End of the World, to awaken Men to a Sense of their Duty, and the great Obligation that lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make Men sensible of their Duty in this particular, because in this last Age, by the unwary Discourse of some concerning the Nature of this Sacrament and the Danger of receiving it unworthily, such Doubts and Fears have been raised in the Minds of Men as utterly to deter many, and in a great measure to discourage almost the generality of Christians from the use of it; to the great Prejudice and Danger of Men's Souls, and the visible Abatement of Piety, by the gross Neglect of so excellent a means of our Growth and Improvement

SERM. ment in it; and the mighty Scandal of our Reli-
 XXV. gion, by the general Disuse and Contempt of so
 plain and solemn an Institution of our blessed Lord
 and Saviour.

Therefore I shall take occasion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of these *four* Points.

First, Of the *Perpetuity* of this Institution; this the *Apostle* signifies when he saith, that *by eating this Bread, and drinking this Cup, we do shew the Lord's Death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the Obligation that lies upon all Christians to a frequent Observance of this Institution; is signified in that Expression of the *Apostle*, *as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup*: Which Expression consider'd and compar'd together with the Practice of the primitive Church, does imply an Obligation upon Christians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to satisfy the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raised in the Minds of Men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their great Discouragement from their receiving this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought: Which *Objections* are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apostle* says, *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and doth eat and drink damnation to himself.*

Fourthly, What *Preparation* of ourselves is necessary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament: Which will give me occasion to explain the *Apostle's* meaning in those Words, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

I. For the *Perpetuity* of this Institution, implied in those Words, *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's Death till he come*: or the Words may be read *imperatively* and by way of Precept, *shew ye forth the Lord's Death till*
 be

he come. In the three *verses* immediately before, the SERM. Apostle particularly declares the Institution of this XXV. Sacrament, with the manner and circumstances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the Apostles, but as the Words seem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himself, *ver. 23. For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you: that the Lord Jesus in the same night that he was betrayed took Bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the Cup when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Institution is in these Words, *this do in remembrance of me.* In which Words our Lord commands his Disciples after his Death to repeat these occasions of *taking, and breaking, and eating the Bread, and drinking of the Cup,* by way of solemn Commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the Disciples only during their Lives, or by all Christians afterwards in all successive Ages of the Church, is not so certain merely from the force of these Words, *do this in remembrance of me:* But what the Apostle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Institution of this Sacrament was intended, not only for the Apostles, and for that Age, but for all Christians, and for all Ages of the Christian Church; *For as often as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come:* That is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the World. So that this Sacrament was designed to be a standing Commemoration of the Death and Passion of our Lord till he should come to Judgment; and consequently the Obligation that lies upon Christians to the Observation of it is perpetual, and shall never cease to the End of the World.

So

SERM. So that it is a vain conceit and meer dream of the
 XXV. *Enthusiasts* concerning the *seculum Spiritus Sancti*,
 the Age and dispensation of the Holy Ghost, when, as
 they suppose, all human Teaching shall cease, and
 all external Ordinances and Institutions in Religion
 shall vanish, and there shall be no farther use of
 them. Whereas it is very plain from the *New Testament*, that Prayer, and Outward Teaching, and
 the use of the two Sacraments, were intended to
 continue among Christians in all Ages. As for *Prayer*,
 (besides our natural Obligation to this Duty, if there
 were no revealed Religion) we are by our Saviour
 particularly exhorted to *watch and pray* with regard
 to the day of Judgment, and in consideration of
 the uncertainty of the time when it shall be: And
 therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent up-
 on Christians till the day of Judgment, because it is
 prescribed as one of the best ways of Preparation for
 it. That *Outward Teaching* likewise and *Baptism*
 were intended to be perpetual is no less plain, because
 Christ hath expressly promised to be with the Tea-
 chers of his Church in the use of these Ordinances
 to the end of the World, *Matth. 28. 19, 20. Go*
and disciple all Nations, baptizing them in the Name
of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Ho'y Ghost:
and lo I am with you always to the end of the World.
 Not only to the end of that particular Age, but to
 the end of the Gospel Age, and the consummation
 of all Ages, as the Phrase clearly imports. And it
 is as plain from this *Text*, that the *Sacrament of the*
Lord's Supper was intended for a perpetual Instituti-
 on in the Christian Church, till the Second Coming
 of Christ, *viz.* his coming to Judgment: Because
 St. Paul tells, that by these Sacramental Signs the
 Death of Christ is to be represented and commemo-
 rated till he comes. *Do this in remembrance of*
me: For as oft as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this
Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.

And if this be the End and Use of this Sacra-^{SERM.}ment, to be a solemn Remembrance of the Death ^{XXV.} and Sufferings of our Lord during his absence from us, that is, till his coming to Judgment, then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the Second Coming of our Lord. The consideration whereof should mightily strengthen and encourage our Faith in the hope of Eternal Life so often as we partake of this Sacrament: Since our Lord hath left it to us as a Memorial of himself till he come to translate his Church into Heaven, and as a sure Pledge that he will come again at the End of the World and invest us in that Glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we should comfort our selves with the Thoughts of that blessed time when we shall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and shall be admitted to the greatest Feast of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God the Judge of all, and with our blessed and glorified Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect.

And the same consideration should likewise make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due Preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives; because of that dreadful Sentence of condemnation which at the Second coming of our Lord shall be past upon those, who by the profanation of this solemn Institution trample underfoot the Son of God, and contemn the Blood of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which God hath ratified with Mankind by the Blood of his Son. The Apostle tells us, that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* This indeed is spoken of temporal Judgment (as I shall shew in the latter part of this Discourse) but the Apostle likewise supposeth, that if these temporal Judgements had not their effect to

SERM. bring Men to Repentance, but they still persisted in
 XXV. the profanation of this holy Sacrament, they should
 at last *be condemned with the World*. For as he that
 partaketh worthily of this Sacrament confirms his
 interest in the Promises of the Gospel and his Title
 to Eternal Life; so he that receives this Sacrament
 unworthily, that is, without due Reverence, and
 without Fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary,
 continues to live in Sin whilst he commemorates the
 Death of Christ, *who gave himself for us that he might
 redeem us from all iniquity*, this Man aggravates and
 seals his own Damnation, because he is guilty of the
 Body and Blood of Christ, not only by the contempt
 of it, but by renewing in some sort the cause of his
 Sufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himself afresh
 the Lord of Life and Glory, and putting him to an open
 shame*. And when the great Judge of the World
 shall appear and pass final Sentence upon Men, such
 obstinate and impenitent Wretches as could not be
 wrought upon by the remembrance of the dearest
 love of their dying Lord, nor be engaged to leave
 their Sins by all the ties and obligations of this holy
 Sacrament, shall have their Portion with *Pilate and
 Judas*, with the *Chief Priests and Soldiers*, who were
 the Betrayers and Murderers of the Lord of Life
 and Glory; and shall be dealt withal as those who
 are in some sort *guilty of the Body and Blood of the
 Lord*. Which severe threatening ought not to dis-
 courage Men from the Sacrament, but to deter all
 those from their Sins who think of engaging them-
 selves to God by so solemn and holy a Covenant. It
 is by no means a sufficient Reason to make Men fly
 from the Sacrament, but certainly one of the most
 powerful Arguments in the World to make Men for-
 sake their Sins; as I shall shew more fully under the
third Head of this Discourse.

II. The *Obligation* that lies upon all Christians to
 the frequent observance and practice of this Instituti-
 on. For though it be not necessarily implied in these
 Words,

Words, *as oft as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup*; SERM. yet if we compare these Words of the *Apostle*, with XXV. the Usage and Practice of Christians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy Sacrament, so often as they solemnly met together to worship God, they plainly suppose and recommend to us the frequent use of this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon Christians to embrace all Opportunities of receiving it. For the Sense and Meaning of any Law or Institution is best understood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince Men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a suitable practice, I shall now endeavour with all the plainness and force of persuasion I can: And so much the more, because the neglect of it among Christians is grown so general, and a great many Persons from a superstitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I shall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Christians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament; each of them sufficient of itself, but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are oblig'd in point of *indispensable Duty*, and in obedience to a plain Precept and most solemn Institution of our blessed Saviour, that great *Law-giver*, who is able to save and to destroy, as St. James calls him: He hath bid us *do this*. And St. Paul, who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the Lord*, admonisheth us to do it *often*. Now for any Man that professeth himself a Christian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Institution of *Christ* is utterly inconsistent with such a profession. To such our Lord may say as he did to the *Jews*, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* How far the Ignorance of this Institution, or the mistakes which Men have been led into about it,

SERM. may extenuate this Neglect, is another consideration.
 XXV. But after we know our Lord's Will in this particular, and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no Cloak for our Sin. For nothing can excuse the wilful neglect of a plain Institution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of *Interest*. The Benefits which we expect to be derived and assured to us by this Sacrament are all the Blessings of the New Covenant, the forgiveness of our Sins, the Grace and Assistance of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform the Conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the Comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well doing, and to support us under Sufferings; and the Glorious Reward of Eternal Life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own Interest and Happiness, we forsake our own Mercies, and judge our selves unworthy of all the Blessings of the Gospel, and deprive our selves of one of the best Means and Advantages of confirming and conveying these Blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our *Duty*, the consideration of our own *Interest* should oblige us not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a Means of promoting our own Comfort and Happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of *Gratitude* to the careful observance of this Institution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in Charge when he was going to lay down his Life for us, *Do this in remembrance of me*. Men use religiously to observe the Charge of a dying Friend, and, unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to do what he desires: But this is the Charge our best Friend (nay of the greatest Friend and Benefactor of all Mankind) when he was preparing himself to die, in our stead, and to offer up himself a Sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous Pains and Sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of temporal Deaths that he might deliver

us from the bitter Pains of Eternal Death. And SERM. can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was XXV. going to do all this for us? Can we deny him this? So little grievous and burthensome in it self, so infinitely beneficial to us? Had such a Friend, and in such circumstances, bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only said, *do this in remembrance of me*; when he hath only commended to us one of the most natural and delightful Actions, as a fit Representation and Memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel Sufferings for our sakes; when he hath only enjoined us, in a thankful commemoration of his goodness, to meet at his Table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to grieve and wound him no more? Can we without the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying Charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great Friend and Lover of Souls; A Command so reasonable, so easy, so full of Blessings and Benefits to the faithful observers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince Men of their Duty in this particular, and of the necessity of observing so plain an Institution of our Lord, that it were no hard thing to persuade Men to their Interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold Blessings which all Christians believe to be promised and made good to the frequent and worthy Receivers of this Sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty? What should be the cause of all this backwardness which we see in Men to so plain, so necessary, and so beneficial a Duty? The truth is, Men have been greatly discouraged from this Sacrament by the unwary pressing and inculcating of two great truths; *the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the necessity of a due preparation for it*. Which brings me to the

SERM.

XXV.

III. *Third Particular* I proposed, which was to endeavour to satisfy the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raised in the Minds of Men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their great discouragement from the receiving of this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought. And these *Objections*, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apostle* says at the 27th verse. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.* And again ver. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* Upon the mistake and misapplication of these *Texts* have been grounded two *Objections* of great force to discourage Men from this Sacrament, which I shall endeavour with all the tenderness and clearness I can to remove. *First*, That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way not to receive at all. *Secondly*, That so much Preparation and Worthiness being required in order to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of devout Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

Object. 1. 1. That the Danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to receive it at all. But this *Objection* is evidently of no force, if there be (as most certainly there is) as great or greater Danger on the other Hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And so though the Danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the Danger of neglecting and contemning a plain Institution of Christ is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refused to come to the *Marriage-feast* of the King's Son, and made light of that gracious Invitation, were at least as faulty as he who came without a *Wedding-Garment*. And we find in the conclusion of the *Parable*, that as he was severely punished for his Disrespect, so they were destroyed for

for their Disobedience. Nay of the two it is the SERM. greater Sign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sa-XXV. crament, than to partake of it without some due qualification. The greatest Indisposition that can be for this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad Man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue so, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of Reverence and Preparation, though much less than he ought: And surely it is very hard for Men to come to so solemn an Ordinance without some kind of religious Awe upon their Spirits, and without some good Thoughts and Resolutions, at least for the present. If a Man that lives in any known wickedness of Life do before he receive the Sacrament set himself seriously to be humbled for his Sins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's Grace and Assistance against them; and after the receiving of it does continue for some time in these good Resolutions, though after a while he may possibly relapse into the same Sins again; this is some kind of restraint to a wicked Life; and these good Moods and Fits of Repentance and Reformation are much better than a constant uninterrupted Course of Sin: even this *righteousness*, which is but *as the Morning cloud and the early Dew which so soon passeth away*, is better than none.

And indeed scarce any Man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this Consideration be excited to some good Purposes, and put upon some sort of Endeavour to amend and reform his Life: And though he be very much under the Bondage and Power of evil Habits, if he do with any competent degree of Sincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make use of this excellent Means and Instrument for the mortifying and subduing of his Lusts and for the obtaining of God's Grace and Assistance, it may please God by the use of these Means, so to abate the Force and Power of his Lusts,

SERM. and to imprint such Considerations upon his Mind
 XXV. in the receiving of this holy Sacrament and prepar-
 ring himself for it, that he may at last break off his
 wicked Course and become a good Man.

But, on the other hand; as to those who neglect
 this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to
 restrain them from the greatest Enormities of Life,
 and to give a check to them in their evil Course:
 Nothing but the Penalty of human Laws, which
 Men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Here-
 tofore Men used to be restrained from great and
 scandalous Vices by Shame and Fear of Disgrace,
 and would abstain from many Sins out of regard to
 their Honour and Reputation among Men: But
 Men have hardened their Faces in this degenerate
 Age, and those gentle Restraints of Modesty which
 governed and kept Men in order heretofore signify
 nothing now-a-days: Blushing is out of Fashion, and
 Shame is ceased from among the Children of Men.

But the Sacrament did always use to lay some kind
 of restraint upon the worst of Men: And if it did
 not wholly reform them, it would at least have some
 good effect upon them for a time: If it did not
 make Men good, yet it would make them resolve
 to be so, and leave some good Thoughts and Im-
 pressions upon their Minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of
 very bad consequence, to discourage Men so much
 from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late
 Years: And that many Men who were under some
 kind of check before, since they have been driven
 away from the Sacrament, have quite let loose the
 Reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of
 Impiety and Vice. And among the many ill effects
 of our past Confusions, this is none of the least,
 That in many Congregations of this Kingdom,
 Christians were generally refused and deterred from
 the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit
 for it: And being so, they must necessarily incur
 the

the Danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore SERM.
 they had better wholly to abstain from it. By which XXV.
 it came to pass that in very many places this great
 and solemn Institution of the Christian Religion was
 almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of
 it; and the Remembrance of Christ's Death even
 lost among Christians: So that many Congregations
 in *England* might justly have taken up the Complaint
 of the Woman at our Saviour's Sepulchre, *they have*
taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have
laid him.

But surely Men did not well consider what they
 did, nor what the Consequences of it would be,
 when they did so earnestly dissuade Men from the Sa-
 crament. 'Tis true indeed the Danger of unworthy
 receiving is great; but the proper Inference and
 Conclusion from hence is not that Men should upon
 this Consideration be deterred from the Sacrament,
 but that they should be affrighted from their Sins,
 and from that wicked Course of Life which is an ha-
 bitual Indisposition and Unworthiness. *St. Paul* in-
 deed (as I observed before) truly represents and very
 much aggravates the Danger of the unworthy recei-
 ving this Sacrament; but he did not deter the *Co-*
rinthians from it, because they had sometimes come
 to it without due Reverence, but exhorts them to
 mend what had been amiss, and to come better pre-
 pared and disposed for the future. And therefore
 after that terrible Declaration in the Text, *Who-*
ever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord
unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord,
 he does not add, Therefore let Christians take heed
 of coming to the Sacrament, but, let them come
 prepared and with due Reverence, not as to a com-
 mon Meal, but as to a solemn Participation of the
 Body and Blood of Christ; *but let a Man examine*
himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of
that Cup.

For

SERM. For, if this be a good Reason to abstain from the
 XXV. Sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an action
 in an undue manner, it were best for a bad Man to
 lay aside all Religion, and to give over the exercise of all the Duties of Piety, of Prayer, of Reading and Hearing the Word of God; because there is a proportionable Danger in the unworthy and unprofitable Use of any of these. *The Prayer of the Wicked* (that is, of one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our Saviour gives us the same Caution concerning hearing the Word of God; *Take heed how you hear.* And St. Paul tells us, that to those who are not reformed by the Doctrine of the Gospel, it is *the Savour of Death*, that is, deadly and damnable to such Persons.

But now will any Man from hence argue, that it is best for a wicked Man not to pray, nor to hear or read the Word of God, lest by so doing he should endanger and aggravate his Condemnation? And yet there is as much reason from this Consideration to persuade Men to give over praying and attending to God's Word, as to lay aside the Use of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the Word of God unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great Contempt of God and of our blessed Saviour; and by his indevout Prayers and unfruitful Hearing of God's Word, does further and aggravate his own Damnation: I say, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high Contempt of Christ, and *eats and drinks his own Judgment*; so that the Danger of the unworthy performing this so sacred an Action, is no otherwise a reason to any Man to abstain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to cast off all Religion. He that unworthily useth or performs any part of Religion is in an evil and dangerous Condition: but he that casts off all Religion plungeth himself into a most desperate

desperate State, and does certainly damn himself SERM.
 to avoid the danger of Damnation : Because he that XXV.
 casts off all Religion throws off all the means whereby
 he should be reclaimed and brought into a better
 State. I cannot more fitly illustrate this matter than
 by this plain Similitude : He that eats and drinks
 intemperately endangers his Health and his Life,
 but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all,
 I need not tell you what will certainly become of him
 in a very short space.

There are some conscientious Persons, who abstain
 from the Sacrament upon an apprehension that the
 Sins which they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake ; our Saviour
 having so plainly declared that all manner of Sin
 shall be forgiven Men except the Blasphemy against
 the Holy Ghost ; such as was that of the
Pharisees, who as our Saviour tells us blasphemed
 the Holy Ghost in ascribing those great Miracles
 which they saw him work, and which he really
 wrought by the Spirit of God, to the power of
 the Devil. Indeed to sin deliberately after so solemn
 an Engagement to the contrary is a great Aggravation
 of Sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable.
 But the neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to
 prevent these Sins ; but on the contrary, the constant
 receiving of it with the best Preparation we
 can is one of the most effectual means to prevent
 Sin for the future, and to obtain the Assistance of
 God's Grace to that end : And if we fall into Sin afterwards,
 we may be renewed by Repentance ; *for we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the*
the righteous, who is the Propitiation for our Sins,
 and as such, is in a very lively and affecting manner
 exhibited to us in this blessed Sacrament of his Body
 broken, and his Blood shed for the remission of our
 Sins. Can we think that the Primitive Christians,
 who so frequently received this holy Sacrament,
 did never after the receiving of it fall into any de-
 liberate

SERM. liberate Sin? Undoubtedly many of them did; but
 XXV. far be it from us to think that such Sins were unpardonable, and that so many good Men should because of their careful and conscientious Observance of our Lord's Institution unavoidably fall into Condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter: Such groundless Fears and Jealousies as these may be a Sign of a good Meaning, but they are certainly a Sign of an injudicious Mind. For if we stand upon these Scruples, no Man perhaps was ever so worthily prepared to draw near to God in any Duty of Religion, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his Mind, and the degree of his Preparation. But if we prepare ourselves as well as we can, this is all God expects. And for our fears of falling into Sin afterwards, there is this plain answer to be given to it; that the Danger of falling into Sin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament, but increased: because a powerful and probable means of preserving Men from Sin is neglected. And why should not every sincere Christian, by the receiving of this Sacrament and renewing his Covenant with God, rather hope to be confirmed in Goodness, and to receive farther Assistances of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to strengthen him against Sin, and to enable him to subdue it; than trouble himself with Fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no sufficient reason to keep any Man from the Sacrament? We cannot surely entertain so unworthy a thought of God and our blessed Saviour, as to imagine that he did institute the Sacrament not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a Snare, and an occasion of our Ruin and Damnation. This were to pervert the gracious Design of God, and to turn the Cup of Salvation into a Cup of deadly Poison to the Souls of Men.

All then that can reasonably be inferred from the SERM.
 Danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this con- XXV.
 sideration Men should be quickned to come to the
 Sacrament with a due Preparation of Mind, and so
 much the more to fortify their Resolutions of living
 suitably to that holy Covenant which they solemnly
 renew every time they receive his holy Sacrament.
 This consideration ought to convince us of the abso-
 lute necessity of a Good Life, but not to deter us
 from the use of any Means which may contribute to
 make us good. Therefore (as a learned *Divine* says
 very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none
 but those who do not understand it, but those who
 are unwilling to be tied to their Duty and are afraid
 of being engaged to use their best diligence to keep
 the Commandments of Christ: And such Persons
 have no reason to fear being in a worse Condition,
 since they are already in so bad a State. And thus
 much may suffice for answer to the *First Objection*
 concerning the great Danger of unworthy receiving
 this holy Sacrament. I proceed to the

Second Objection, which was this; That so much
 Preparation and Worthiness being required to our
 worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of Chri-
 stians can never think themselves duly enough quali-
 fied for so sacred an Action.

For a full Answer to this Objection, I shall en-
 deavour briefly to clear these *three* things. *First*,
 That every degree of Imperfection in our Prepara-
 tion for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for
 Men to refrain from it. *Secondly*, That a total want
 of a due Preparation, not only in the degree but in
 the main and substance of it, though it render us
 unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet it does
 by no means excuse our neglect of it. *Thirdly*, That
 the proper Inference and Conclusion from the total
 want of a due Preparation is not to cast off all
 thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immedi-
 ately

SERM. ately to set upon the work of Preparation that so we
 XXV. may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make
 ~~~~~ out these *three* things, I hope this Objection is fully  
 answer'd.

1. That every degree of Imperfection in our Preparation for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for Men to abstain from it: For then no Man should ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and respects duly qualified to approach the presence of God in any of the Duties of his Worship and Service? Who can *wash his hands in innocency*, that so he may be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? *There is not a man on Earth that lives and sins not.* The Graces of the best Men are imperfect; and every Imperfection in Grace and Goodness is an Imperfection in the Disposition and Preparation of our Minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our Sins, and sincerely resolve to obey and perform the Terms of the Gospel, and of that Covenant which we entered into by Baptism, and are going solemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at least in some degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently, that by this spiritual Food of God's appointing, by *this living Bread which comes down from Heaven*, our Souls may be nourish'd in Goodness, and new Strength and Virtue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our Hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of God's Commandments with more Constancy and Delight. For the way to grow in Grace and to be *strengthened with all might in the inner Man*, and to *abound in all the fruits of Righteousness which by Christ Jesus are to the Praise and Glory of God*, is with care and Conscience to use those means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the use of these means it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his Grace and Assistance. We may tire our selves with our Devotions,  
 and



and fill Heaven with vain Complaints, and yet by SERM.  
all this Importunity obtain nothing at God's hand : XXV.  
Like lazy Beggars that are always complaining and  
always asking, but will not work, will do nothing  
to help themselves and better their Condition, and  
therefore are never like to move the Pity and Com-  
passion of others. If we expect God's Grace and As-  
sistance, we must work out our own Salvation in the  
careful use of all those Means which God has ap-  
pointed to that End. That excellent degree of  
Goodness which Men would have to fit them for the  
Sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it.  
And therefore it is a preposterous thing for Men  
to insist upon having the End before they will  
use the Means that may further them in the obtain-  
ing of it.

2. The total want of a due Preparation, not on-  
ly in the Degree but in the Main and Substance of  
it, though it render us unfit at present to receive  
this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuse our  
neglect of it. One Fault may draw on another,  
but can never excuse it. It is our great Fault that  
we are wholly unprepared, and no Man can claim  
any Benefit by his Fault, or plead it in excuse or ex-  
tenuation of this neglect. A total want of Prepa-  
ration and an absolute Unworthiness is Impenitency  
in an evil Course, a Resolution to continue a bad  
Man, not to quit his Lusts and to break off that  
wicked Course he hath lived in : But is this any ex-  
cuse for the neglect of our Duty, that we will not  
fit our selves for the doing of it with Benefit and Ad-  
vantage to our selves ? A Father commands his  
Son to ask him Blessing every day, and is ready to  
give it him ; but so long as he is undutiful to him  
in his other Actions, and lives in open Disobedience,  
forbids him to come in his sight. He excuseth him-  
self from asking his Father's Blessing, because he is  
undutiful in other things, and resolves to continue  
so. This is just the Case of neglecting the Duty God  
requires,

SERM. requires, and the Blessings he offers to us in the Sa-  
 XXV. crament, because we have made our selves incapable  
 of so performing the one as to receive the other ; and  
 are resolved to continue so. We will not do our  
 Duty in other things, and then plead that we are  
 unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the  
 Sacrament.

3. The proper Inference and Conclusion from a  
 total want of due preparation for the Sacrament is not  
 to cast off all Thoughts of receiving it, but imme-  
 diately to set about the Work of Preparation, that  
 so we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true,  
 that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to  
 receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any Bene-  
 fit ; nay by doing it in such a manner render their  
 Condition much worse, this is a most forcible Argu-  
 ment to Repentance and Amendment of Life. There  
 is nothing reasonable in this case but immediately to  
 resolve upon a better Course, that so we may be meet  
 Partakers of those holy Mysteries, and may no lon-  
 ger provoke God's Wrath against us by the wilful  
 neglect of so great and necessary a Duty of the Chri-  
 stian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, so  
 long as we do wilfully refuse to fit and qualify our  
 selves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let  
 us view the thing in a like Case ; A Pardon is graci-  
 ously offered to a Rebel, he declines to accept it, and  
 modestly excuseth himself because he is not worthy  
 of it. And why is he not worthy ? because he re-  
 solves to be a Rebel, and then his Pardon will do  
 him no good, but be an aggravation of his Crime.  
 Very true : And it will be no less an aggravation that  
 he refuseth it for such a Reason, and under a pretence  
 of Modesty does the most imprudent thing in the  
 World. This is just the Case ; and in this Case there  
 is but one thing reasonable to be done, and that is,  
 for a Man to make himself capable of the Benefit as  
 soon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it : But  
 to excuse himself from accepting of the Benefit  
 offered,

offered, because he is not worthy of it, nor fit for SERM.  
 it, nor ever intends to be so, is as if a Man should XXV.  
 desire to be excused from being happy because he is  
 resolved to play the Fool and to be miserable. So  
 that whether our want of Preparation be total, or  
 only to some degree, it is every way unreasonable:  
 If it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder  
 us from receiving the Sacrament; if it be total, it  
 ought to put us immediately upon removing the Im-  
 pediment, by making such Preparation as is necessa-  
 ry to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this  
 brings me to the

IV. *Fourth* and last thing I proposed, viz. what  
 Preparation of our selves is necessary in order to the  
 worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I told  
 you would give me occasion to explain the *Apostle's*  
 meaning in the last part of the *Text*, *but let a Man*  
*examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and*  
*drink of that Cup.* I think it very clear from the oc-  
 casion and circumstances of the *Apostle's* Discourse  
 concerning the Sacrament that he does not intend the  
 examination of our State, whether we be Christians  
 or not, and sincerely resolve to continue so; and  
 consequently that he does not here speak of our ha-  
 bitual Preparation by the Resolution of a good Life.  
 This he takes for granted, that they were Christians  
 and resolved to continue and persevere in their Chris-  
 tian Profession: But he speaks of their actual Fitness  
 and Worthiness at that time when they came to re-  
 ceive the Lord's Supper, and for the clearing of this  
 matter, we must consider what it was that gave oc-  
 casion to this Discourse. At the 20th *verse* of this  
*Chapter* he sharply reproves their irreverent and un-  
 suitable Carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came  
 to it very disorderly, *one before another.* It was the  
 Custom of Christians to meet at their *Feast of Charity*,  
 in which they did communicate with great Sobriety  
 and Temperance; and when that was ended they ce-  
 lebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Now



SERM. among the *Corinthians* this Order was broken. The  
 XXV. Rich met, and excluded the Poor from this com-  
 mon Feast. And after an irregular Feast (one be-  
 fore another eating his own Supper as he came) they  
 went to the Sacrament in great disorder, *one was*  
*hungry*, having eaten nothing at all; *others were*  
*drunk*, having eaten intemperately, and the Poor  
 were despised and neglected. This the *Apostle* con-  
 demns as a great Profanation of that solemn Institu-  
 tion of the Sacrament; at the participation whereof  
 they behaved themselves with as little reverence as if  
 they had been met at a common Supper or Feast.  
 And this he calls *not discerning the Lord's Body*,  
 making no difference in their behaviour between the  
 Sacrament and a common Meal: Which irreve-  
 rent and contemptuous Carriage of theirs he calls  
*eating and drinking unworthily*: For which he pro-  
 nounceth them *guilty of the Body and Blood of the*  
*Lord*, which were represented and commemorated  
 in their *eating of that Bread and drinking of that*  
*Cup*. By which irreverent and contemptuous u-  
 sage of the Body and Blood of our Lord, he tells  
 them that they did incur the Judgment of God;  
 which he calls *eating and drinking their own Judg-*  
*ment*. For that the Word *κρίσις*, which our *Transla-*  
*tors* render *Damnation*, does not here signify eternal  
 Condemnation, but a temporal Judgment and Chas-  
 tisement in order to the prevention of eternal Con-  
 demnation, is evident from what follows; *He that*  
*eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh*  
*Judgment to himself*: And then he says, *For this*  
*cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many*  
*sleep*: That is, for this Irreverence of theirs God  
 hath sent among them several Diseases, of which  
 many had died. And then he adds, *For if we*  
*would judge our selves, we should not be judged*. If  
 we would judge our selves; whether this be meant of  
 the public Censures of the Church, or our private  
 censu-

censuring of our selves in order to our future A-SERM.  
 mendment and Reformation, is not certain. If of XXV.  
 the latter, which I think most probable, then *judging*  
 here is much the same with *examining our selves*, v.  
 28. And then the *Apostle's* meaning is, that if we  
 would censure and examine our selves, so as to be  
 more careful for the future, we should escape the  
 Judgment of God in these temporal Punishments.  
*But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,*  
*that we should not be condemned with the World. But*  
*when we are judged*; that is, when by neglecting  
 thus to judge our selves we provoke God to judge  
 us, *we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not*  
*be condemned with the World*; that is, he inflicts these  
 temporal Judgments upon us to prevent our eternal  
 Condemnation: Which plainly shews, that the  
 Judgment here spoken of is not eternal Condemna-  
 tion. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my Bre-*  
*thren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one ano-*  
*ther. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home,*  
*that ye come not together unto judgment*: Where the  
*Apostle* plainly shews both what was the Crime of un-  
 worthy receiving, and the Punishment of it. Their  
 Crime was, their irreverent and disorderly partici-  
 pation of the Sacrament; and their Punishment  
 was, those temporal Judgments which God inflict-  
 ed upon them for this their contempt of the Sacra-  
 ment.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are pro-  
 portionably to understand the Precept of examinati-  
 on of our selves *before we eat of that Bread and drink*  
*of that Cup. But let a man examine himself*; that is,  
 consider well with himself what a sacred Action he  
 is going about, and what behaviour becomes him  
 when he is celebrating this Sacrament instituted by  
 our Lord in memorial of his Body and Blood, that  
 is, of his Death and Passion: And if heretofore he  
 have been guilty of any Disorder and Irreverence  
 (such as the *Apostle* here taxeth them withal) let him

SERM. XXV. censure and *judge himself* for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future ; and having thus *examined himself*, let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup. This, I think, is the plain sense of the *Apostle's* Discourse ; and that if we attend to the Scope and Circumstances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, Is this all the Preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any Irreverence and Disorder in the celebration of it ? I answer in short, this was the particular Unworthiness with which the *Apostle* taxeth the *Corinthians* ; and which he warns them to amend, as they desire to escape the Judgments of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, so unsuitable to the holy Sacrament. He finds no other fault with them at present in this matter, though any other sort of irreverence will proportionably expose Men to the like Punishment. He says nothing here of their habitual Preparation, by the sincere purpose and resolution of a good Life answerable to the Rules of the Christian Religion : This we may suppose he took for granted. However, it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other religious Duty. Not but that it is very true that none but those who do heartily embrace the Christian Religion, and are sincerely resolved to frame their Lives according to the holy Rules and Precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this solemn Acknowledgment and Profession of it. So that it is a Practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, because it is of great use, for Christians by way of Preparation for the Sacrament, to examine themselves in a larger Sense, than in all probability the *Apostle* here intended : I mean to examine our past Lives, and the Actions of them in order to a sincere Repentance of



all our Errors and Miscarriages, and to fix us in the SERM.  
 ready Purpose and Resolution of a better Life : Par-XXV-  
 ticular, when we expect to have the Forgiveness of  
 our Sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all Enmi-  
 ty : and thoughts of Revenge, and heartily forgive  
 those that have offended us, and put in practice that  
 universal Love and Charity which is represented to  
 us by this holy Communion. And to this purpose  
 we are earnestly exhorted in the publick Office of  
 the Communion by way of due Preparation and dis-  
 position for it, to *repent us truly of our Sins past, to*  
*amend our Lives, and to be in perfect Charity with all*  
*Men, that so we may be meet Partakers of those holy*  
*Mysteries.*

And because this work of examining our selves  
 concerning our State and Condition, and of exerci-  
 sing Repentance towards God and Charity towards  
 Men is incumbent upon us as we are Christians, and  
 can never be put in practice more seasonably and with  
 greater advantage than when we are meditating of  
 this Sacrament ; therefore besides our habitual Pre-  
 paration by Repentance and the constant endeavours  
 of a holy Life, it is a very pious and commendable  
 Custom in Christians before their coming to the Sa-  
 crament to set apart some particular time for this  
 work of Examination. But how much time every  
 Person should allot to this purpose is matter of Pru-  
 dence ; and as it need not, so neither indeed can it  
 be precisely determined. Some have greater rea-  
 son to spend more time upon this work than others ;  
 I mean those whose accounts are heavier because they  
 have long run upon the score and neglected them-  
 selves : And some also have more leisure and free-  
 dom for it, by reason of their easy Condition and  
 Circumstances in the World ; and therefore are ob-  
 liged to allow a greater Portion of time for the  
 Exercises of Piety and Devotion. In general, no  
 Man ought to do a Work of so great Moment and  
 concernment slightly and perfunctorily. And in

SERM. this, as in all other Actions, the End is principally  
 XXV. to be regarded. Now the End of examining our  
 ~~~~~ selves is to understand our State and Condition, and  
 to reform whatever we find amiss in ourselves. And
 provided this End be obtained, the Circumstances
 of the means are less considerable: Whether more
 or less time be allowed to this work, it matters
 not so much, as to make sure that the work be
 thoroughly done.

And I do on purpose speak thus cautiously in this
 matter, because some pious Persons do perhaps err
 on the stricter hand, and are a little superstitious on
 that side; insomuch that unless they can gain so
 much time to set apart for a solemn Preparation, they
 will refrain from the Sacrament at that time; though
 otherwise they be habitually prepared. This I doubt
 not proceeds from a pious-Mind; but as the *Apostle*
 says in another case about the Sacrament, *shall I*
praise them in this? I praise them not. For, pro-
 vided there be no wilful neglect of due Preparation,
 it is much better to come so prepared as we can, nay
 I think it is our duty so to do, rather than to abstain
 upon this *punctilio*. For when all is done, the best
 Preparation for the Sacrament is the general care
 and endeavour of a good Life: And he that is thus
 prepared may receive at any time when opportunity
 is offered, though he had no particular foresight of
 that opportunity. And I think in that case such a
 one shall do much better to receive than to re-
 frain; because he is habitually prepared for the Sa-
 crament, though he had no time to make such actual
 Preparation as he desired. And if this were not al-
 lowable, how could Ministers communicate with sick
 Persons at all times, or persuade others to do it
 many times upon very short and sudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the primitive
 Christians, who received the Sacrament so frequently,
 that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it
 as essential and necessary a part of their publick
 Worship

Worship as any other part of it whatsoever, even SERM.
 as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and in- XXV.
 terpreting the Word of God : I say, we cannot well
 conceive how they who celebrated it so constantly,
 could allot any more time for a solemn Preparation
 for it, than they did for any other part of Divine
 Worship : And consequently, that the *Apostle* when
 he bids the *Corinthians* examine themselves, could
 mean no more than that considering the Nature and
 Ends of this Institution they should come to it with
 great Reverence ; and reflecting upon their former
 Miscarriages in this matter, should be careful upon
 his Admonition to avoid them for the future and to
 amend what had been amiss : which to do, requires
 rather Resolution and Care than any long time of
 Preparation.

I speak this, that devout Persons may not be en-
 tangled in an apprehension of a greater necessity than
 really there is of a long and solemn Preparation every
 time they receive the Sacrament. The great neces-
 sity that lies upon Men is to live as becomes Chri-
 stians, and then they can never be absolutely unpre-
 pared. Nay, I think this to be a very good Prepa-
 ration ; and I see not why Men should not be very
 well satisfied with it, unless they intend to make the
 same use of the Sacrament that many of the Papists
 do of Confession and Absolution, which is to quit
 with God once or twice a year, that so they may be-
 gin to sin again upon a new score.

But because the Examination of our selves is a
 thing so very useful, and the time which Men are
 wont to set apart for their Preparation for the Sacra-
 ment is so advantageous an Opportunity for the
 Practice of it ; therefore I cannot but very much
 commend those who take this occasion to search and
 try their ways, and to call themselves to a more solemn
 account of their Actions. Because this ought to be
 done some time, and I know no fitter time for it
 than this. And perhaps some would never find

SERM. time to recollect themselves and to take the condi-
 XXV. tion of their Souls into serious consideration, were
 it not upon this solemn occasion.

The sum of what I have said is this, that sup-
 posing a Person to be habitually prepared by a reli-
 gious Disposition of Mind and the general Course
 of a good Life, this more solemn actual Prepara-
 tion is not always necessary: And it is better when
 there is an opportunity to receive without it, than
 not to receive at all. But the greater our actual
 Preparation is, the better. For no Man can ex-
 amine himself too often, and understand the State
 of his Soul too well, and exercise Repentance, and
 renew the Resolutions of a good Life too frequent-
 ly. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for
 the doing of all this, than when we approach the
 Lord's Table, there to commemorate his Death,
 and to renew our Covenant with him to live as
 becomes the Gospel.

All the Reflection I shall now make upon this Dis-
 course, shall be from the Consideration of what has
 been said earnestly to excite all that profess and call
 themselves Christians to a due Preparation of them-
 selves for this holy Sacrament, and a frequent Par-
 ticipation of it according to the Intention of our
 Lord and Saviour in the Institution of it, and the
 undoubted Practice of Christians in the primitive
 and best Times, when Men had more Devotion and
 fewer Scruples about their Duty.

If we do in good earnest believe that this Sacra-
 ment was instituted by our Lord in remembrance of
 his dying Love, we cannot but have a very high va-
 lue and esteem for it upon that account. Methinks
 so often as we read in the Institution of it those
 Words of our dear Lord, *do this in remembrance of*
me, and consider what he who said them did for us,
 this dying charge of our best Friend should stick
 with us and make a strong Impression upon our
 Minds: Especially if we add to these, those other
 Words

Words of his, not long before his Death, *Greater* SERM.
Love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his XXV.
Life for his Friend; ye are my Friends if ye do what-
soever I command you. It is a wonderful Love which
 he hath expressed to us, and worthy to be had in per-
 petual remembrance. And all that he expects from
 us, by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to ce-
 lebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent partici-
 pation of this blessed Sacrament. And shall this
 Charge laid upon us by him who laid down his Life
 for us, lay no obligation upon us to the solemn re-
 membrance of that unparallel'd Kindness which is the
 Fountain of so many Blessings and Benefits to us? It
 is a sign we have no great sense of the Benefit when
 we are so unmindful of our Benefactor as to forget
 him Days without number. The Obligation he hath
 laid upon us is so vastly great, not only beyond all
 Requitall, but beyond all Expression, that if he had
 commanded us some very grievous thing we ought
 with all the readiness and chearfulness in the World
 to have done it; how much more when he hath im-
 posed upon us so easy a Commandment, a thing of
 no burthen but of immense Benefit? When he hath
 only said to us, *Eat O Friends, and drink O Beloved?*
 When he only invites us to his Table, to the best
 and most delicious Feast that we can partake of on
 this side Heaven?

If we seriously believe the great Blessings which are
 there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon
 us, we should be so far from neglecting them,
 that we should heartily thank God for every oppor-
 tunity he offers to us of being made Partakers of such
 Benefits. When such a price is put into our Hands,
 shall we want Hearts to make use of it? Methinks
 we should long with *David* (who saw but a shadow
 of these Blessings) to be satisfied with the good things
 of God's House, and to draw near his Altar; and
 should cry out with him, *O when shall I come and ap-*
pear before thee! My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for
the

A Discourse against

the Courts of the Lord, and my Flesh crieth out for the living God. And if we had a just esteem of things, we should account it the greatest Infelicity and Judgment in the World to be debarred of this Privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our selves of.

We exclaim against the Church of *Rome* with great Impatience, and with a very just Indignation, for robbing the People of half of this blessed Sacrament, and taking from them the *Cup of Blessing, the Cup of Salvation*; and yet we can patiently endure for some Months, nay Years, to exclude ourselves wholly from it. If no such great Benefits and Blessings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our selves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our Graces, and our slow progress and improvement in Christianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best Means of our Growth in Goodness. Well do we deserve that God should send Leanness into our Souls, and make them to consume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God himself doth spread so bountiful a Table for us, and set before us the Bread of Life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulness.

S E R M O N XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation.

SERM. XXVI. **C**ONCERNING the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, one of the two great positive Institutions of the Christian Religion, there are two main points of difference between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*. One about

about the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the Scripture and the words of our Saviour on their side: The *other*, about the administration of this Sacrament to the People in both kinds; in which we are sure that we have the Scripture and our Saviour's Institution on our side; and that so plainly that our Adversaries themselves do not deny it.

Of the *first* of these I shall now treat, and endeavour to shew against the Church of Rome, *That in this Sacrament there is no substantial change made of the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Body and Blood of Christ; that Body* which was born of the *Virgin-Mary*, and suffered upon the Cross; for so they explain that hard Word *Transubstantiation*.

Before I engage in this Argument, I cannot but observe what an unreasonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our Adversaries, to dispute a matter of Sense; which is one of those things about which *Aristotle* hath long since pronounced there ought to be no Dispute.

It might well seem strange if any Man should write a Book, to prove that an *Egg* is not an *Elephant*, and that a *Musket-bullet* is not a *Pike*: It is every whit as hard a case, to be put to maintain by a long Discourse, that what we see and handle and taste to be *Bread*, is *Bread* and not the *Body of a Man*; and what we see and taste to be *Wine*, is *Wine* and not *Blood*: And if this Evidence may not pass for sufficient without any farther Proof, I do not see why any man, that hath Confidence enough to do so, may not deny any thing to be what all the World sees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the World sees it is not: and this without all possibility of being farther confuted. So that the Business of *Transubstantiation* is not a Controversy of Scripture against Scripture, or of Reason against Reason, but of downright Impudence against the plain

SERM. plain Meaning of Scripture, and all the Sense and
XXVI. Reason of Mankind.

It is a most self-evident Falshood; and there is no Doctrine or Proposition in the World that is of itself more evidently true, than *Transubstantiation* is evidently false: And yet if it were possible to be true, it would be the most ill-natured and pernicious Truth in the World, because it would suffer nothing else to be true; it is like the *Roman Catholick Church*, which will needs be the whole Christian Church, and will allow no other Society of Christians to be any part of it: So *Transubstantiation*, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing else is true; for it cannot be true unless our Senses, and the Senses of all Mankind be deceived about their proper Objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing else can be so; for if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.

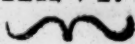
And yet notwithstanding all this, there are a Company of Men in the World so abandon'd and given up by God to the efficacy of delusion as in good earnest to believe this gross and palpable Error, and to impose the belief of it upon the Christian World under no less Penalties than of Temporal Death and Eternal Damnation. And therefore to undeceive, if possible, these deluded Souls, it will be necessary to examine the pretended grounds of so false a Doctrine, and to lay open the monstrous absurdity of it.

And in the handling of this Argument, I shall proceed in this plain method.

I. I shall consider the pretended Grounds and Reasons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine.

II. I shall produce our *Objections* against it. And if I can shew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible Objections against it, then every Man is not only in reason excused from believing this Doctrine, but hath great cause to believe the contrary.

FIRST,

FIRST, I will consider the pretended Grounds SERM. and Reasons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doc-XXVI. trine. Which must be one or more of these five.  Either 1st, The Authority of Scripture. Or 2^{dly}, The perpetual Belief of this Doctrine in the Christian Church, as an evidence that they always understood and interpreted our Saviour's Words, *This is my Body*, in this sense. Or 3^{dly}, The Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith. Or 4^{thly}, The absolute necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the Comfort and Benefit of those who receive the Sacrament. Or 5^{thly}, To magnify the Power of the Priest in being able to work so great a Miracle.

1st, They pretend for this Doctrine the Authority of Scripture in those Words of our Saviour, *This is my Body*. Now to shew the Insufficiency of this pretence, I shall endeavour to make good these *two* things.

1. That there is no necessity of understanding those Words of our Saviour in the sense of *Transubstantiation*.

2. That there is a great deal of reason, nay that it is very absurd and unreasonable, not to understand them otherwise.

First, that there is no necessity to understand those Words of our Saviour in the sense of *Transubstantiation*. If there be any, it must be from one of these two Reasons. Either because there are no figurative expressions in Scripture, which I think no Man ever yet said: Or else, because a Sacrament admits of no Figures; which would be very absurd for any Man to say, since it is of the very nature of a Sacrament to represent and exhibit some invisible Grace and Benefit by an outward Sign and Figure: And especially since it cannot be denied, but that in the Institution of this very Sacrament our Saviour useth figurative Expressions, and several Words which cannot be taken strictly and literally. When he
gave

SERM. gave the Cup he said, *This Cup is the new Testament*
 XXVI. *in my Blood. which is shed for you and for many for the*
 remission of Sins. Where first, the Cup is put for
 the Wine contained in the Cup; or else if the Words
 be literally taken, so as to signify a substantial
 change, it is not of the Wine but of the Cup; and
 that, not into the Blood of Christ but into the New
 Testament or New Covenant in his Blood. Besides,
 that his Blood is said then to be shed, and his Body
 to be broken, which was not till his Passion, which
 followed the Institution and first Celebration of this
 Sacrament.

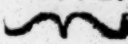
But that there is no necessity to understand our
 Saviour's words in the sense of *Transubstantiation*,
 I will take the plain confession of a great number of
 the most learned Writers of the Church of Rome in
 this Controversy, ^a Bellarmine, ^b Suarez and ^c Vas-
 quez do acknowledge ^d Scotus the great Schoolman to
 have said that this Doctrine cannot be evidently
 proved from Scripture: And Bellarmine grants this
 not to be improbable; and Suarez and Vasquez ac-
 knowledge ^d Durandus to have said as much. ^e Oc-
 ham another famous Schoolman, says expressly, that
 the Doctrine which holds the substance of the Bread
 and Wine to remain after Consecration is neither re-
 pugnant to Reason nor to Scripture. ^a Petrus ab Al-
 liaco Cardinal of Cambray says plainly, that the Doc-
 trine of the Substance of Bread and Wine remaining
 after Consecration is more easy and free from ab-
 surdity, more rational, and no ways repugnant to the
 Authority of Scripture; nay more, that for the other
 Doctrine, viz. of Transubstantiation, there is no evi-
 dence in Scripture. ^b Gabriel Biel, another great
 Schoolman and Divine of their Church, freely de-
 clares, that as to any thing express in the Canon of the
 Scriptures, a Man may believe that the substance of
 Bread and Wine doth remain after Consecration: And
 therefore he resolves the belief of Transubstantiation
 into some other Revelation, besides Scripture, which

he supposeth the Church had about it. Cardinal ^a Ca-SERM.
 etan confesseth that *the Gospel doth not here express* XXVI.
that the Bread is changed into the Body of Christ; that
we have this from the authority of the Church: nay, ^{2 in Aquin.}
he goes farther, that there is nothing in the Gospel ^{3. part.}
which enforceth any Man to understand these Words of Qu. 75.
Christ, this is my Body, in a proper and not in a me- art. 1.
aphorical sense; but the Church having understood them
in a proper sense they are to be so explained: Which
Words in the Roman Edition of Cajetan are expun-
ged by order of Pope ^b Pius. V. Cardinal ^c Conta-^b Egid.
renus, and ^d Melchior Canus one of the best and Conick. de
most judicious Writers that Church ever had, reckon Sacram.
this Doctrine among those which are not so expressly Qu. 75.
found in Scripture. I will add but one more of great art. 1. n. 13.
authority in the Church, and a reputed Martyr, de Sa-
Fisher Bishop of Rochester who ingeniously confes- cram. 1.
seth that in the Words of the Institution, there is not 2. c. 3.
one Word from whence the true presence of the Flesh and a Loc.
Blood of Christ in our Mass can be proved: So that we Theolog. 1.
need not much contend that this Doctrine hath no 3. c. 3.
certain foundation in Scripture, when this is so fully contra
and frankly acknowledged by our Adversaries them- captiv.
selves. Babylon.
 c. 10. n. 2.

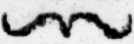
Secondly, If there be no necessity of understanding
 our Saviour's Words in the sense of *Transubstantiati-*
on, I am sure there is a great deal of Reason to un-
 derstand them otherwise. Whether we consider the
 like Expressions in Scripture; as where our Saviour
 says he is *the Door* and *the true Vine* (which the
 Church of *Rome* would mightily have triumph'd
 in, had it been said, *this is my true Body*.) And so
 likewise where the Church is said to be *Christ's Body*;
 and the *Rock* which followed the *Israelites* to be
Christ, 1 Cor. 10. 4. *They drank of that Rock which*
followed them, and that Rock was Christ: All which
 and innumerable more like Expressions in Scripture
 every Man understands in a figurative, and not in a
 strictly

SERM. strictly literal and absurd Sense. And it is very well known, that in the *Hebrew* Language things are commonly said to be that which they do signify and represent; and there is not in that Language a more proper and usual way of expressing a thing to signify so and so, than to say that it is so and so. Thus *Joseph* expounding *Pharaoh's* dream to him *Gen. 41. 26.* says *the seven Good Kine are seven Years*, and *the seven good Ears of Corn are seven Years*; that is, they signified or represented seven Years of Plenty; and so *Pharaoh* understood him, and so would any Man of Sense understand the like Expressions; nor do I believe that any sensible Man who had never heard of *Transubstantiation* being grounded upon these Words of our Saviour, *this is my Body*, would upon reading the Institution of the Sacrament in the Gospel ever have imagin'd any such thing to be meant by our Saviour in those Words; but would have understood his meaning to have been *this Bread* signifies my *Body*, *this Cup* signifies my *Blood*; and this which you see me now do, do ye hereafter for a *Memorial* of me: But surely it would never have entred into any Man's mind to have thought that our Saviour did literally hold himself in his hand, and give away himself for himself with his own hands. Or whether we compare these Words of our Saviour with the ancient Form of the Passover used by the *Jews* from *Ezra's* time, as *Justin Martyr* tells us, τοῦτο τὸ πάχα ὁ σωτήρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ καταφυγή ἡμῶν, *this Passover is our Saviour and our Refuge*: Not that they believed the Paschal Lamb to be substantially changed either into God their Saviour who delivered them out of the Land of *Egypt*, or into the *Messias* the Saviour whom they expected and who was signified by it: But this Lamb which they did eat did represent to them and put them in mind of that Salvation which God wrought for their Fathers in *Egypt*, when by the slaying of a Lamb and sprinkling the Blood of it upon

^a *Diolog.*
cum Typ.
p. 297. E-
dit. Paris.
1639.

upon their Doors, their First-born were passed over SERM.
 and spared ; and did likewise fore-shew the Salvati- XXVI.
 on of the *Messias, the Lamb of God that was to take* 
away the Sins of the World. :

And nothing is more common in all Languages than to give the Name of the thing signified to the Sign, as the Delivery of a Deed or Writing under Hand and Seal is call'd a Conveyance or making over of such an Estate, and it is really so ; not the delivery of meer Wax and Parchment, but the conveyance of a real Estate, as truly and really to all effects and purposes of Law, as if the very material Houses and Lands themselves could be and were actually delivered into my hands : In like manner the Names of the things themselves made over to us in the new Covenant of the Gospel between God and Man, are given to the Signs or Seals of that Covenant. By *Baptism* Christians are said to be *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, Heb. 6. 4. And by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we are said to *communicate* or to be made partakers of *the Body of Christ* which was broken, and of his *Blood* which was shed for us, that is, of the real Benefits of his Death and Passion. And thus St. Paul speaks of this Sacrament, 1 Cor. 10. 16. *The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ ?* But still it is Bread, and he still calls it so, v. 17. *For we being many are one Bread and one Body ; for we are partakers of that one Bread.* The Church of Rome might, if they pleased, as well argue from hence that all Christians are substantially changed first into Bread, and then into the natural Body of Christ by their participation of the Sacrament, because they are said thereby to be *one Bread and one Body*. And the same Apostle in the next Chapter, after he had spoken of the Consecration of the Elements still calls them the *Bread and the Cup*, in three verses together. *As often as ye eat*
 VOL. II. this

SERM. *this Bread and drink this Cup*, v. 26. *Whosoever shall*
 XXVI. *eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unwor-*
 *thily*, v. 27. But let a Man examine himself, and so
 let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup, v.
 28. and our Saviour himself when he had said *this*
is my Blood of the New Testament, immediately adds,
Matth. 26. 29. but I say unto you, I will not henceforth
drink of this fruit of the Vine, until I drink it new
with you in my Father's Kingdom, that is, not till af-
 ter his Resurrection, which was the first step of his
 exaltation into the Kingdom given him by his Fa-
 ther, when the Scripture tells us he did eat and drink
 with his Disciples. But that which I observe from
 our Saviour's Words is, that after the consecration of
 the Cup, and the delivering of it to his Disciples to
 drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth
 drink no more of that Fruit of the Vine, which he
 had now drank with them, till after his Resurrection.
 From whence it is plain that it was the Fruit of the
 Vine, real Wine which our Saviour drank of, and
 communicated to his Disciples in the Sacrament.

Besides, if we consider that he celebrated this Sa-
 crament before his Passion, it is impossible these
 Words should be understood literally of the natural
 Body and Blood of Christ; because it was *his Body*
broken and *his Blood shed* which he gave to his Disciples,
 which if we understand literally of his natural Body
 broken and his Blood shed, then these Words, *this*
is my Body which is broken, and this is my Blood which
is shed, could not be true, because his Body was then
 whole and unbroken, and his Blood not then shed;
 nor could it be a *Propitiatory Sacrifice* (as they affirm
 this Sacrament to be) unless they will say that Propi-
 tiation was made before Christ suffered: And it is
 likewise impossible that the Disciples should under-
 stand these Words literally, because they not only
 plainly saw that what he gave them was *Bread* and
Wine, but they saw likewise as plainly that it was not
 his Body which was given, but his Body which gave
 that

that which was given; not his Body *broken* and his Blood *shed*, because they saw him alive at that very time, and beheld his Body whole and unpierced; and therefore they could not understand these Words literally: If they did, can we imagine that the Disciples, who upon all other occasions were so full of Questions and Objections, should make no difficulty of this Matter; nor so much as ask our Saviour, *how* can these things be? that they should not tell him, we see this to be Bread and that to be Wine, and we see thy Body to be distinct from both; we see thy Body not broken, and thy Blood not shed.

From all which it must needs be very evident, to any Man that will impartially consider things, how little Reason there is to understand those Words of our Saviour, *this is my Body, and this is my Blood*, in the sense of *Transubstantiation*; nay on the contrary, that there is very great Reason and an evident necessity to understand them otherwise. I proceed to shew,

2dly, That this Doctrine is not grounded upon the perpetual belief of the Christian Church, which the Church of Rome vainly pretends as an Evidence that the Church did always understand and interpret our Saviour's Words in this Sense.

To manifest the groundlessness of this pretence, I shall, 1. shew by plain testimony of the *Fathers* in several Ages, that this Doctrine was not the Belief of the ancient Christian Church. 2. I shall shew the time and occasion of its coming in, and by what degrees it grew up and was establish'd, in the *Roman* Church. 3. I shall answer their great pretended Demonstration, that this always was and must have been the constant Belief of the Christian Church.

I. I shall shew by plain Testimonies of the *Fathers* in several Ages, for above five hundred Years after Christ, that this Doctrine was not the Belief of the ancient Christian Church. I deny not but that the *Fathers* do, and that with great Reason, very

SERM. much magnifie the wonderful Mystery and Efficacy
 XXVI. of this Sacrament, and frequently speak of a great
 w supernatural change made by the divine Benediction;
 which we also readily acknowledge. They say indeed, that the Elements of Bread and Wine do by the divine Blessings become to us the Body and Blood of Christ: But they likewise say that the Names of the things signified are given to the Signs; that the Bread and Wine do still remain in their proper Nature and Substance, and that they are turn'd into the Substance of our Bodies; that the Body of Christ in the Sacrament is not his natural Body; but the Sign and Figure of it; not that Body which was crucified, nor that Blood which was shed upon the Cross; and that it is impious to understand the *eating of the Flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his Blood* literally; all which are directly opposite to the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* and utterly inconsistent with it. I will select but some few Testimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpose.

I begin with *Justin Martyr*, who says expressly,
 a *Apol.* 2. that *our Blood and Flesh are nourished* by the conver-
 p. 98. sion of *that Food* which we receive in the *Eucharist*:
 Edit. But *that* cannot be the natural Body and Blood of
 Parif. Christ, for no Man will say that *that* is converted
 1636. into the nourishment of our Bodies.

b *Lib.* 4. The *Second* is *Irenæus*, who speaking of this Sa-
 c. 34. crament says, that the *Bread which is from the Earth*
receiving the divine invocation is now no longer common
Bread, but the Eucharist (or Sacrament,) consisting of
two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly. He
 says it is no longer common Bread, but after invoca-
 tion or Consecration it becomes the Sacrament, that
 is, Bread sanctified, consisting of two things, an
 earthly and heavenly; the earthly thing is Bread,
 and the heavenly is the Divine Blessing which by the
 Invocation or Consecration is added to it. And
 c. c. 21. elsewhere he hath this passage, *when therefore the*

Cup that is mix'd (that is of Wine and Water) *and the* SERM. *Bread that is broken receives the Word of God, it becomes* XXVI. *the Eucharist of the Blood and Body of Christ, of which* the substance of our Flesh is increased and consists; but if that which we receive in the Sacrament do nourish our Bodies, it must be Bread and Wine, and not the natural Body and Blood of Christ. There is another remarkable Testimony of *Irenæus*, which though it be not now extant in those *Works* of his which remain, yet hath been preserved by (a) *Oecumenius*, and (a) Com- it is this; when (says he) the Greeks had taken some ment. *Servants of the Christian Catechumeni* (that is such as in 1 Pct. had not been admitted to the Sacrament) and af- 3. terwards urged them by violence to tell them some of the secrets of the Christians, these Servants having nothing to say that might gratify those who offered violence to them, except only that they had heard from their Masters that the Divine Communion was the Blood and Body of Christ, they thinking that it was really Blood and Flesh, declar'd as much to those that question'd them, The Greeks taking this as if it were really done by the Christi- ans, discovered it to others of the Greeks; who hereupon put Sanctus and Blandina to the torture to make them confess it. To whom Blandina boldly answer'd, How could they endure to do this, who by way of exercise (or abstinence) do not eat that Flesh which may lawfully be eaten? By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon Christians, as if they had literally eaten the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, was a false Accusation which these Mar- tyrs denied, saying they were so far from that, that they for their part did not eat any Flesh at all.

The next is *Tertullian*, who proves against *Marcion* the Heretick, that the Body of our Saviour was not a meer Phantasm and Appearance, but a real Body, because the Sacrament is a Figure and Image of his Body; and if there be an Image of his Body he must have a real Body, otherwise the Sacrament would be an Image of an Image. His Words are

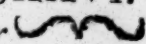
SERM. these, ^a *The Bread which our Saviour took and distrib-*
 XXVI. *uted to his Disciples he made his own Body, saying*
this is my Body, that is, the Image or Figure of my Body.

^a *Advers.* But it could not have been the Figure of his Body, if
 Marchi-
 onem l. 4. there had not been a true and real Body. And argu-
 p. 571. E-
 dit. Rigal. ing against the Scepticks who denied the certainty
 Parif. of sense he useth this Argument: That if we questi-
 1634. on our Senses we may doubt whether our Blessed Sa-
 viour were not deceived in what he heard, and saw,

and touched. ^b *He might (says he) be deceived in the*
^b *Lib. de* voice from Heaven, in the smell of the Ointment with
Anima, p. which he was anointed against his Burial, and in
 §19. the taste of the Wine which he consecrated in remem-
 brance of his Blood. So that it seems we are to trust
 our Senses, even in the matter of the Sacrament:
 And if that be true, the Doctrine of *Transubstantia-*
tion is certainly false.

^c Edit.
 Huetii.

Origen in his ^c Comment on *Matth. 15.* speaking
 of the Sacrament hath this Passage, *That food which*
is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer, as to that
of it which is material, goeth into the Belly and is cast
out into the draught, which none will surely say of
the Body of Christ. And afterwards he adds by
 way of explication, *it is not the matter of the Bread,*
but the Words which are spoken over it, which pro-
fiteth him that worthily eateth the Lord, and this (he
says) he had spoken concerning the Typical and Symbo-
lical Body. So that the matter of Bread remaineth
 in the Sacrament, and this Origen calls the *Typical*
and Symbolical Body of Christ; and it is not the na-
 tural Body of Christ which is there eaten; for the
 food eaten in the Sacrament, as to that of it which
 is material, goeth into the Belly, and is cast out into
 the Draught. This Testimony is so very plain in
 the Cause that *Sextus Senensis* suspects this place of
 Origen was depraved by the Hereticks. *Cardinal*
Perron is contented to allow it to be Origen's, but
 rejects his Testimony because he was accused of He-
 resie

refie by some of the Fathers, and says he talks like SERM.
an Heretick in this place. So that with much ado XXVI.
this Testimony is yielded to us. The same *Father* 
in his ^d *Homilies* upon *Leviticus* speaks thus, *There* ^d Cap. 10.
is also in the New Testament a letter which kills him
who doth not spiritually understand those things which
are said; for if we take according to the Letter that
which is said, EXCEPT YE EAT MY FLESH
AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this Letter
kills. And this also is a killing Testimony, and not to
be answer'd but in Cardinal Perron's way, by saying
he talks like a Heretick.

St. Cyprian hath a whole *Epistle* ^e to *Cecilius* against Ep. 65.
those who gave the Communion in Water only
without Wine mingled with it; and his main Ar-
gument against them is this, that *the Blood of*
Christ with which we are redeemed and quickned cannot
seem to be in the Cup when there is no Wine in the Cup
by which the Blood of Christ is represented: and after-
wards he says that contrary to the Evangelical and A-
postolical Doctrine, Water was in some Places offer'd
(or given) in the Lord's Cup, which (says he) alone
cannot express (or represent) the Blood of Christ.
And lastly, he tells us, that by *Water* the People is
understood, *By Wine the Blood of Christ is shewen*
(or represented,) but when in the Cup Water is min-
gled with Wine the People is united to Christ. So
that according to this Argument, *Wine* in the Sacra-
mental *Cup* is no otherwise changed into the *Blood of*
Christ than the Water mixed with it is changed
into the *People* which are said to be *united to Christ.*

I omit many others, and pass to St. *Austin* in the
fourth Age after Christ. And I the rather insist up-
on his Testimony, because of his eminent Esteem
and Authority in the *Latin Church*; and he also
calls the *Elements* of the Sacrament the *Figure and*
Sign of Christ's Body and Blood. In his Book against
Adamantus the *Manichee* we have this Expression;
Our Lord did not doubt to say, this is my Body when

SERM. *he gave the sign of his Body*^a. And in his explication of the third Psalm, speaking of Judas whom

our Lord admitted to his last Supper, in which (says ^a Aug. he) ^b he commended and delivered to his Disciples the figure of his Body; Language which would now be censured for Heresie in the Church of Rome. In

deed he was never accus'd of Heresie, as Cardinal Perron says Origen was, but he talks as like one as Origen himself. And in his Comment on the 98th Psalm, speaking of the Offence which the Disciples took at that Saying of our Saviour, *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, &c.*

he brings in our Saviour speaking thus to them, ^c Ye must understand spiritually what I have said unto you; ye are not to eat this Body which ye see, and to drink that Blood which shall be shed by those that shall crucify me. I have commended a certain Sacrament to you, which being spiritually understood will give you Life. What more opposite to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, than that the Disciples were not to eat that Body of Christ which they saw, nor to drink that Blood which was shed upon the Cross, but that all this was to be understood spiritually and according to the nature of a Sacrament? For that Body he tells us is not here but in Heaven, in his Comment upon these Words, *Me ye have not al-*

^d *ways.* He speaks (says he) of the Presence of his Body: Ye shall have me according to my providence, according to Majesty and invisible Grace: But according to the flesh which the Word assumed, according to that which was born of the Virgin Mary, ye shall not have me: Therefore because he conversed with his Disciples forty days, he is ascended up into Heaven, and is not here.

In his 23d. Epistle, ^e If the Sacrament (says he) had not some resemblance of those things whereof they are Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all: But from this resemblance they take for the most part the

the names of the things which they represent. There-
fore as the Sacrament of the Body of Christ is in some
manner or sense Christ's Body, and in the Sacrament of
his Blood is the Blood of Christ; So the Sacrament of
Faith (meaning Baptism) is faith. Upon which
Words of St. Austin there is this remarkable Gloss
in their own Canon-Law? ^a The heavenly Sacrament ^a De Con-
which truly represents the flesh of Christ is called the ^{secrat. dist.}
Body of Christ; but improperly: Whence it is said, ^{2. Hoc est.}
that after a manner, but not according to the truth of
the thing, but the Mystery of the thing, signified; so
that the meaning is, it is called the Body of Christ,
that is it signifies the Body of Christ: And if this be
St. Austin's meaning, I am sure no Protestant can
speak more plainly against Transubstantiation. And
in the ancient Canon of the Mass, before it was
chang'd in compliance with this new Doctrine, it is
expressly called a Sacrament, a Sign, an Image, and
Figure of Christ's Body. To which I will add that
remarkable passage of St. Austin cited by ^b Gratian, ^b De Con-
That as we receive the similitude of his Death in Bap-
tism, so we may also receive the likeness of his Flesh and ^{2. Sect. U-}
Blood, that so neither may truth be wanting in the Sa-
crament, nor Pagans have occasion to make us ridiculous
for drinking the Blood of one that was slain.

I will mention but one Testimony more of this
Father, but so clear a one as it is impossible any
Man in his Wits that had believed Transubstantiati-
on could have utter'd. It is in his Treatise ^c de doc- ^c Lib. 3.
trina Christiana; where laying down several Rules ^{Tom. 3.}
for the right understanding of Scripture, he gives ^{p. 53.}
this for one. " If (says he) the speech be a Precept
" forbidding some heinous Wickedness or Crime,
" or commanding us to do good, it is not figura-
" tive; but if it seem to command any heinous
" Wickedness or Crime, or to forbid that which is
" profitable or beneficial to others, it is figurative.
" For example, Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son
" of Man and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in
" you:

SERM. "you: This seems to command a heinous Wick-
 XXVI. edness and Crime, therefore it is a figure; com-
 manding us to communicate of the passion of our
 Lord, and with delight and advantage to lay up
 in our memory that his flesh was crucified and
 wounded for us." So that, according to St.
Austin's best Skill in interpreting Scripture, the *literal*
 eating of the Flesh of Christ, and drinking his
 Blood, would have been a great Impiety; and there-
 fore the Expression is to be understood *figuratively*;
 not as Cardinal *Perron* would have it, only in oppo-
 sition to the eating of his Flesh and Blood in the
 gross appearance of Flesh and Blood, but to the real
 eating of his natural Body and Blood under any Ap-
 pearance whatsoever: For St. *Austin* doth not say,
 this is a Figurative Speech wherein we are comman-
 ded really to feed upon the natural Body and Blood
 of Christ under the *species* of Bread and Wine, as
 the *Cardinal* would understand him; for then the
 Speech would be literal and not figurative: But he
 says, this is a figurative Speech wherein we are com-
 manded spiritually to feed upon the remembrance of
 his Passion.

To these I will add but *three* or *four* Testimonies
 more in the *two* following Ages.

The first shall be of *Theodoret*, who speaking of
 that Prophecy of *Jacob* concerning our Saviour,
Gen. 49. 11. he washed his Garments in Wine, and his
 Dialogue *clothes in the blood of Grapes*, hath these Words, "As
 1. *we call the mystical fruit of the Vine* (that is, the Wine
 in the Sacrament) *after consecration the Blood of the*
Lord, so he (viz. *Jacob*) *calls the Blood of the true*
Vine (viz. of Christ) *the Blood of the Grape*: But the
 Blood of Christ is not literally and properly, but on-
 ly figuratively the Blood of the Grape, in the same
 sense as he is said to be the true Vine; and therefore
 the Wine in the Sacrament after Consecration is in
 like manner not literally and properly but figura-
 tively

tively the Blood of Christ. And he explains this af-^{SERM.}
terwards, saying, that *our Saviour changed the names, XXVI.*
and gave to his Body the name of the Symbol or Sign,
and to that Symbol or Sign the name of his Body; thus
when he had call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Sym-
bol or Sign his Blood; so that in the same sense that he
call'd himself the Vine, he call'd the Wine, which is
the Symbol of his Blood, his Blood: " For, says
" *he*, he would have those who partake of the Di-
" vine Mysteries not to attend to the nature of the
" things which are seen, but by the change of names
" to believe the change which is made by Grace;
" for he who call'd that which by nature is a Body,
" Wheat, and Bread, and again likewise call'd
" himself the Vine, he honour'd the Symbols with
" the name of his Body and Blood: not changing
" Nature, but adding Grace to Nature." Where you
see he says expressly, that when he call'd the Symbols
or Elements of the Sacrament, viz. Bread and Wine
his Body and Blood, he made no change in the Na-
ture of the things, only added Grace to Nature,
that is, by the Divine Grace and Blessing he raised
them to a spiritual and supernatural virtue and effi-
cacy.

The Second is of the same Theodoret, in his second
Dialogue between a Catholick under the name of Or-
thodoxus, and an Heretick under the name of Eranis-
tes; who maintaining that the Humanity of Christ
was chang'd into the Substance of the Divinity
(which was the Heresy of Eutyches) he illustrates the
matter by this Similitude. " As, says *he*, the Sym-
" bols of the Lord's Body and Blood are one thing
" before the Invocation of the Priest, but after the
" Invocation are changed and become another
" thing; so the Body of our Lord after his Ascen-
" sion is changed into the divine Substance." But
what says the Catholick Orthodoxus to this? why, he
talks just like one of Cardinal Perron's Hereticks:
" Thou art, says *he*, caught in thy own Net, be-
" cause

SERM. " cause the mystical Symbols after Consecration do
 XXVI. " not pass out of their own nature : For they remain
 " in their former substance, figure and appearance,
 " and may be seen and handled even as before."
 He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the Symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and substance of them, even in the proper and strictest sense of the word Substance ; and it was necessary so to do, otherwise he had not given a pertinent Answer to the Similitude urg'd against him.

The next is one of their own Popes, *Gelasius*, who brings the same instance against the *Eutycians* ;
 a Biblioth. " Surely, *says he*, the Sacraments which we re-
 Pat. Tom. " ceive of the Body and Blood of our Lord are a
 4 " Divine Thing, so that by them we are made partakers of a Divine Nature, and yet it ceaseth not to be the substance or nature of Bread and Wine ; and certainly the image and resemblance of Christ's Body and Blood are celebrated in the action of the Mysteries," that is, in the Sacrament. To make this Instance of any force against the *Eutycians*, who held that the Body of Christ upon his Ascension ceas'd, and was chang'd into the substance of his Divinity, it was necessary to deny that there was any substantial change in the Sacrament of Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. So that here is an infallible Authority, one of their own Popes, expressly against *Transubstantiation*.

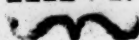
The last Testimony I shall produce is of *Facundus* an *African* Bishop, who lived in the 6th Century. Upon occasion of justifying an Expression of one who had said that *Christ also received the Adoption of Sons*, he reasons thus. " Christ vouchsafed to receive the Sacrament of Adoption both when he was circumcised and baptised : And the Sacrament of Adoption may be called Adoption, as the Sacrament of his body and blood, which is in the consecrated bread and cup, is by us called his body and blood ; not that the bread, *says he*, is properly

b Facund.
 p. 144.
 edit. Par.
 1676.

properly his body and the cup his blood, but be-
cause they contain in them the mysteries of his
body and blood; hence our Lord himself
called the blessed bread and cup which he gave
to his Disciples his body and blood." Can any
Man after this believe that it was then, and had
ever been, the universal and received Doctrine of
the Christian Church, that the Bread and Wine in
the Sacrament are substantially changed into the
proper and natural Body and Blood of Christ?

By these plain Testimonies which I have produ-
ced, and I might have brought a great many more
to the same purpose, it is I think evident beyond all
denial, that *Transubstantiation* has not been the per-
petual belief of the Christian Church. And this like-
wise is acknowledg'd by many great and learned
Men of the Roman Church. ^a Scotus acknowledgeth, ² In sent.
that this Doctrine was not always thought necessary ^{1. 4. Dist.}
to be believed, but that the necessity of believing it ^{11. Q. 3.}
was consequent to that Declaration of the Church
made in the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent*
III. And ^b *Durandus* freely discovers his Inclination ^b In sent.
to have believed the contrary, if the Church had not by ^{1. 4. dist.}
that determination obliged men to believe it. ^c *Tonstal* ^{11. q. 1. n?}
Bishop of Durham also yields, that before the *Lateran* ^{15.}
Council men were at liberty as to the manner of Christ's ^{de Eu-}
presence in the Sacrament. And ^a *Erasmus*, who li- ^{p. 146.}
ved and died in the Communion of the *Roman Church*, ^{In 1}
and than whom no man was better read in the ^{Epist. ad}
ancient *Fathers*, doth confess that it was late before the ^{Corinth.}
Church defined *Transubstantiation*, unknown to the An- ^{c. 7. citan-}
cients both Name and Thing. And ^e *Alphonfus a Cas-* ^{te etiam}
tro says plainly, that concerning the *Transubstantiation* ^{Salmerone,}
of the bread into the body of Christ, there is seldom any ^{Tom. 9.}
mention in the ancient Writers. And who can ima- ^{Traet. 16.}
gine that these learned Men would have granted ^{p. 108.}
the ancient Church and Fathers to have been so ^c *De Hæ-*
much Strangers to this Doctrine, had they thought ^{ref. 1. 8.}
it

SERM. it to have been the perpetual Belief of the Church?
XXVI. I shall now in the

 *Second place, give an account of the particular time and occasion of the coming in of this Doctrine, and by what steps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an Article of Faith in the Romish Church. The Doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ was first started upon occasion of the Dispute about the Worship of Images, in opposition whereto the Synod of Constantinople about the year 750 did argue thus, That our Lord having left us no other Image of himself but the Sacrament, in which the substance of Bread is the Image of his Body, we ought to make no other Image of our Lord. In answer to this Argument the second Council of Nice, in the year 787, did declare, that the Sacrament after Consecration is not the Image and Antitype of Christ's Body and Blood, but is properly his Body and Blood. So that the corporeal presence of the body of Christ in the Sacrament was first brought in to support the stupid Worship of Images: And indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occasion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpose.*

And here I cannot but take notice how well this
 * De Eu- agrees with * Bellarmine's Observation, that none of
 char. l. 1. the Antients who wrote of Heresies, bath put this Er-
 c. 1. ror (viz. of denying Transubstantiation) in his Cata-
 logue; nor did any of the Ancients dispute against this
 Error for the first 600 years. Which is very true,
 because there could be no occasion then to dispute
 against those who denied Transubstantiation, since, as
 I have shewn, this Doctrine was not in being, un-
 less among the Eutychian Hereticks, for the first 600
 years and more. But ^b Bellarmine goes on and tells
 us, that the first who call'd in question the truth of the
 Body of the Lord in the Eucharist were the ICONO-
 MACHI (the opposers of Images) after the Year
 700, in the Council of Constantinople; for these said
 there was one Image of Christ instituted by Christ him-
 self,

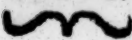
^b Ibid.

lf, viz. the Bread and Wine in the Eucharist : which SERM.
presents the Body and Blood of Christ : Where-XXVI.
re from that time the Greek Writers often admonish
that the Eucharist is not the Figure or Image of the
ody of the Lord, but his true Body, as appears from
e VII. Synod; which agrees most exactly with
e account which I have given of the first rise of
his Doctrine, which began with the corporeal Pre-
ence of Christ in the Sacrament, and afterwards pro-
ceeded to Transubstantiation.

And as this was the first occasion of introducing
his Doctrine among the Greeks, so in the Latin or
Roman Church, Paschasius Radbertus, first a Monk,
and afterwards Abbot of Corbey, was the first Broach-
er of it, in the year 818.

And for this, besides the evidence of History,
we have the acknowledgment of two very emi-
nent Persons in the Church of Rome, Bellarmine and
Sirmondus, who do in effect confess that this Pas-
chasius was the first who wrote to purpose upon this
Argument. ^a Bellarmine in these words, *This Author* ^a De Scrip-
was the first who hath seriously and copiously written con- tor. Ec-
cerning the truth of Christ's Body and Blood in the cles.

Eucharist : And ^b Sirmondus in these, *He so first ex-* ^b In vita
plained the genuine sense of the Catholick Church, that Paschasii.
he opened the way to the rest who afterwards in great
numbers wrote upon the same Argument : But though
Sirmondus is pleased to say that he only first explain-
ed the sense of the Catholick Church in this point,
yet it is very plain from the Records of that Age
which are left to us, that this was the first time that
this Doctrine was broached in the Latin Church ; and
it met with great opposition in that Age, as I shall
have occasion hereafter to shew. For Rabanus Mau-
rus Archbishop of Mentz, about the year 847, re-
peating the very words of Paschasius wherein he had
delivered his Doctrine, hath this remarkable passage
concerning the novelty of it ; Some, says he, ^c of late ^c Epist. ad.
not having a right opinion concerning the Sacrament of Heribal-
dum, c.
the 33.

SERM. *the Body and Blood of our Lord, have said that this*
 XXVI. *the Body and Blood of our Lord, which was born of*
 *the Virgin Mary, and in which our Lord suffered upon*
the Cross and rose from the dead: which error, says
he, we have opposed with all our might. From whence
it is plain, by the Testimony of one of the greatest
and most learned Bishops of that Age, and of emi-
nent reputation for Piety, that what is now the ve-
ry Doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning the
Sacrament, was then esteemed an Error broach'd
by some particular Persons, but was far from being
the generally received Doctrine of that Age. Can
any one think it possible that so eminent a Person in
the Church, both for Piety and Learning, could
have condemn'd this Doctrine as an Error and a No-
velty, had it been the general Doctrine of the Chri-
stian Church, not only in that but in all former
Ages: and no Censure pass'd upon him for that
which is now the great burning Article in the Church
of Rome, and esteemed by them one of the greatest
and most pernicious Heresies?

Afterwards in the year 1059, when *Berengarius* in
France and Germany had rais'd a fresh opposition
 against this Doctrine, he was compelled to recant
 it by P. *Nicholas* and the Council at *Rome*, in these
 words, *a That the Bread and Wine which are set upon*
the Altar, after the Consecration, are not only the Sa-
crament, but the true Body and Blood of our Lord Je-
sus Christ; and are sensibly, not only in the Sacrament,
but in truth, handled and broken by the hands of the
Priest, and ground or bruised by the Teeth of the Faith-
ful. But it seems the Pope and his Council were not
 then skilful enough to express themselves rightly in
 this matter; for the *Gloss* upon the Canon-law
 says expressly, *b That unless we understand these words*
of Berengarius (that is in truth of the Pope and
his Council) in a sound sense, we shall fall into a
greater Heresy than that of Berengarius: for we do
not make parts of the Body of Christ. The mean-
 ing

^a Gratian. de Consecrat. distinct. 2.
 Lanfranc. de corp. & sang. Do-
 mini, c.
 5. Guil. mun. de Sacram.
 Algar. de Sacram.
 l. 1. c. 19.
^b Gloss. Decret. de consecrat. dist. 2. in cap. Ego Berengarius.

ing of which Glos I cannot imagine, unless it be SERM.
this, that the *Body of Christ*, tho' it be in truth XXVI.
broken, yet it is not *broken into parts*, (for we do
not make parts of the *Body of Christ*) but into wholes:
Now this new way of *breaking a body*, not into parts
but into *wholes*, (which in good earnest is the Doc-
trine of the Church of *Rome*) though to them that
are able to believe *Transubstantiation* it may for any
thing I know appear to be *sound sense*, yet to us
that cannot believe so, it appears to be *solid Non-*
sense.

About 20 years after, in the year 1079, Pope
Gregory the VIIth began to be sensible of this absur-
dity; and therefore in another Council at *Rome*
made *Berengarius* to recant in another Form, viz.
* *That the Bread and Wine which are placed upon the* Waldens,
Altar, are substantially changed into the true and pro- To. 1. c.
per and quickening Flesh and Blood of our Lord Jesus 13.
Christ, and after Consecration are the true Body of
Christ, which was born of the Virgin, and which
being offered for the Salvation of the World did hang
upon the Cross, and sits at the Right-hand of the
Father.

So that from the first starting of this Doctrine in
the second Council of *Nice* in the year 787, till the
Council under Pope Gregory the VIIth in the year
1079, it was almost three hundred years that this
Doctrine was contested, and before this mishapen
Monster of *Transubstantiation* could be lick'd into
that form in which it is now settled and establish'd
in the Church of *Rome*. Here then is a plain ac-
count of the first rise of this Doctrine, and of the
several steps whereby it was advanced by the Church
of *Rome* into an *Article of the Faith*. I come now
in the

Third place, to answer the great pretended Demon-
stration of the impossibility that this Doctrine, if it
had been new, should ever have come in, in any Age,
and been received in the Church: and consequently it

SERM. *must of necessity have been the perpetual belief of the*
 XXVI. *Church in all Ages*: For if it had not always been
 the Doctrine of the Church, whenever it had at-
 tempted first to come in there would have been a
 great stir and bustle about it, and the whole Christian
 World would have rose up in opposition to it. But
 we can shew no such time when it first came in,
 and when any such opposition was made to it, and
 therefore it was always the Doctrine of the Church.
 This *Demonstration* Monsieur *Arnauld*, a very learn-
 ed Man in *France*, pretends to be unanswerable:
 Whether it be so or not I shall briefly examine.
 And,

1st. We do assign a punctual and very likely
 time of the first rise of this Doctrine, about the be-
 ginning of the *ninth* Age; though it did not take
 firm root, nor was fully settled and established till
 towards the end of the *eleventh*. And this was the
 most likely time of all other, from the beginning of
 Christianity, for so gross an Error to appear; it be-
 ing, by the confession and consent of their own *Histo-*
rians, the most dark and dismal time that ever hap-
 pened to the Christian Church, both for *Ignorance*
 and *Superstition* and *Vice*. It came in together with
Idolatry, and was made use of to support it: A fit
 Prop and Companion for it. And indeed what *Tares*
 might not the Enemy have sown in so dark and long
 a *Night*; when so considerable a part of the Christian
 World was lull'd asleep in profound Ignorance and
 Superstition? And this agrees very well with the
 account which our *Saviour* himself gives in the *Pa-*
rabole of the *Tares*, of the springing up of Errors
 and Corruptions, in the Field of the Church. *While*
the Men slept [Matt. 13. 24.] the Enemy did his Work
 in the Night, so that when they were awake they
 wondered how and whence the *Tares* came; but be-
 ing sure they were there, and that they were not sown
 at first, they concluded *the Enemy had done it*.

Secondly,

Secondly, I have shewn likewise that there was con-SERM.
siderable opposition made to this Error at its first com-XXVI.
ing in. The general Ignorance and gross Superstition of that Age rendred the generality of People more quiet and secure, and disposed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of Mystery in Religion, and of a greater Reverence and Devotion to the Sacrament, and that seemed any way to countenance the Worship of *Images*, for which at that time they were zealously concern'd. But notwithstanding the security and passive temper of the People, the Men most eminent for Piety and Learning in that time made great resistance against it. I have already named *Rabanus* Archbishop of *Mentz*, who opposed it as an Error lately sprung up, and which had then gain'd but upon some few Persons. To whom I may add *Heribaldus* Bishop of *Auxerres* in France, *Jo. Scotus Erigena*, and *Ratramnus*, commonly known by the name of *Bertram*, who at the same time were employed by the Emperor *Charles the Bald* to oppose this growing Error, and wrote learnedly against it. And these were the eminent Men for Learning in that time. And because Monsieur *Arnauld* will not be satisfied unless there were some stir and bustle about it. *Bertram* in his Preface to his Book tells us, that they who according to their several opinions talked differently about the mystery of Christ's body and blood were divided by no small Schism.

Thirdly, Though for a more clear and satisfactory Answer to this pretended *Demonstration* I have been contented to untie this Knot, yet I could without all these pains have cut it. For suppose this Doctrine had silently come in and without opposition, so that we could not assign the particular time and occasion of its first Rise; yet if it be evident from the Records of former Ages for above 500 years together, that this was not the ancient Belief of the Church; and plain also, that this Doctrine was afterwards

SERM. receiv'd in the *Roman Church*, though we could not
 XXVI. tell how and when it came in, yet it would be the
 wildest and most extravagant thing in the world
 to set up a pretended Demonstration of Reason
 against plain Experience and Matter of fact. This
 is just *Zeno's* Demonstration of the impossibility of
 Motion against *Diogenes* walking before his Eyes.
 For this is to undertake to prove that impossible to
 have been, which most certainly was. Just thus the
Servants in the *Parable* might have demonstrated
 that the *Tares* were *Wheat*, because they were sure
 none but good Seed was sown at first, and no man
 could give any account of the punctual time when
 any *Tares* were sown, or by whom: and if an En-
 nemy had come to do it, he must needs have met
 with great Resistance and Opposition; but no such
 Resistance was made, and therefore there could be
 no *Tares* in the *Field*, but that which they call'd
Tares was certainly good *Wheat*. At the same rate
 a Man might demonstrate that our *King*, his Majesty
 of *Great-Britain*, is not return'd into *England*, nor
 restor'd to his Crown; because there being so great
 and powerful an Army possess'd of his Lands, and
 therefore obliged by interest to keep him out, it was
 impossible he should ever come in without a great
 deal of Fighting and Bloodshed: but there was no
 such thing, therefore he is not return'd and restor'd
 to his Crown. And by the like kind of Demonstra-
 tion one might prove that the *Turk* did not invade
Christendom last year, and besiege *Vienna*; because if
 he had, the *Most Christian King*, who had the great-
 est Army in *Christendom* in a readiness, would cer-
 tainly have employ'd it against him; but *Monf. Ar-*
nauld certainly knows no such thing was done: And
 therefore, according to his way of Demonstration,
 the matter of fact, so commonly reported and believed,
 concerning the *Turks Invasion of Christendom* and
 besieging *Vienna* last year, was a perfect Mistake.
 But a Man may demonstrate till his Head and

Heart

Heart ake, before he shall ever be able to prove that SERM.
 which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For XXVI.
 of all sorts of Impossibles nothing is more evident-
 ly so, than to make that which hath been not to
 have been. All the Reason in the World is too
 weak to cope with so tough and obstinate a Difficul-
 ty. And I have often wonder'd how a Man of Mons.
Arnauld's great Wit and sharp Judgment could pre-
 vail with himself to engage in so bad and baffled a
 Cause; or could think to defend it with so *wooden a*
Dagger as his *Demonstration of Reason* against cer-
 tain *Experience* and *matter of Fact*: A thing, if it
 be possible, of equal absurdity with what he pre-
 tends to demonstrate, *Transubstantiation* it-self. I
 proceed to the

Third pretended ground of this Doctrine of
Transubstantiation; and that is, *the infallible Autho-*
rity of the present Church to make and declare new
Articles of Faith. And this in truth is the Ground
 into which the most of the learned Men of their
 Church did heretofore, and many do still, resolve
 their belief of this Doctrine: And, as I have al-
 ready shewn, do plainly say that they see no suffi-
 cient reason, either from *Scripture* or *Tradition*, for
 the belief of it: And that they should have believed
 the contrary had not the determination of the Church
 obliged them otherwise.

But if this Doctrine be obtruded upon the world
 merely by virtue of the Authority of the *Roman*
 Church, and the Declaration of the Council under
 Pope *Gregory* the VII, or of the *Lateran* Council
 under *Innocent* III, then it is a plain Innovation in
 the Christian Doctrine, and a new Article of Faith
 impos'd upon the Christian World. And if any
 Church hath this power, the Christian Faith may be
 enlarged and changed as often as Men please; and
 that which is no part of our Saviour's Doctrine, nay,
 any thing, tho' never so absurd and unreasonable,
 may become an Article of Faith, obliging all Christi-

SERM. ans to the belief of it, whenever the Church of Rome
 XXVI. shall think fit to stamp her Authority upon it: which
 would make Christianity a most uncertain and endless
 thing.

The *Fourth* pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *the necessity of such a change as this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of those who receive it.* But there is no colour for this, if the thing be rightly consider'd: Because the Comfort and Benefit of the Sacrament depend upon the Blessing annexed to the Institution. And as *Water* in *Baptism*, without any substantial change made in that Element, may by the Divine Blessing accompanying the Institution be effectual to the washing away of Sin, and spiritual Regeneration; So there can no reason in the world be given why the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Lord's Supper* may not, by the same Divine Blessing accompanying this Institution, make the worthy Receivers Partakers of all the spiritual Comfort and Benefit designed to us thereby, without any substantial Change made in those Elements, since our Lord hath told us, that *verily the flesh profiteth nothing.* So that if we could do so odd and strange a thing as to eat the very natural Flesh and drink the Blood of our Lord, I do not see of what greater advantage it would be to us than what we may have by partaking of the Symbols of his Body and Blood as he hath appointed *in remembrance of him.* For the spiritual Efficacy of the Sacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, supposing we receive what our Lord appointed, and receive it with a right Preparation and Disposition of Mind, but upon the supernatural Blessing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to those spiritual Ends for which it was appointed.

The *Fifth* and last pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *to magnify the power of the priest in being able to work so great a Miracle.* And this with great Pride and Pomp is often urg'd by them as a transcendent

pendent instance of the Divine Wisdom, to find out SERM.
 so admirable a way to raise the Power and Reverence XXVI.
 of the Priest; that he should be able every day, and
 as often as he pleases, by repeating a few Words to
 work so miraculous a change, and (as they love most ab-
 surdly and blasphemously to speak) *to make God himself.*

But this is to pretend to a power above that of
 God himself, for he did not, nor cannot make
 himself, nor do any thing that implies a con-
 tradiction, as *Transubstantiation* evidently does in
 their pretending *to make God.* For to make that
 which already is, and make that *now* which *always*
 was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done,
 but impossible because it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all *Transubstantiation*, if it were
 possible and actually wrought by the Priest, would
 yet be no Miracle; For there are two things neces-
 sary to a Miracle, that there be a supernatural Ef-
 fect wrought, and that this Effect be evident to
 Sense. So that tho' a supernatural Effect be wrought,
 yet if it be not evident to Sense, it is to all the ends
 and purposes of a Miracle as if it were not; and can
 be no testimony or proof of any thing, because itself
 stands in need of another Miracle to give testimony
 to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And nei-
 ther in Scripture, nor in prophane Authors, nor
 in common use of Speech, is any thing called a Mi-
 racle but what falls under the notice of our Senses:
 A *Miracle* being nothing else but *a supernatural*
Effect evident to Sense, the great end and design
 whereof is to be a sensible Proof and Conviction to
 us of something that we do not see.

And for want of this condition, *Transubstantiati-*
on, if it were true, would be no Miracle. It would
 indeed be very *supernatural*, but for all that it would
 not be a *Sign* or *Miracle*: For a *Sign* or *Miracle* is
 always a thing sensible, otherwise it could be no
Sign. Now that such a change as is pretended in
Transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet

SERM. there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a
 XXVI. thing very wonderful, but not to sense ; for our
 Senses perceive no change, the Bread and Wine in
 the Sacrament to all our Senses remaining just as
 they were before : And that a thing should remain
 to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all
 of wonder in it ; we wonder indeed when we see a
 strange thing done, but no Man wonders when he
 sees nothing done. So that *Transubstantiation*, if
 they will needs have it a Miracle, is such a Miracle
 as any Man may work that hath but the confidence
 to face Men down that he works it, and the fortune
 to be believed : And though this Church of Rome
 may magnifie their Priests upon account of this
 Miracle which they say they can work every day and
 every hour, yet I cannot understand the reason of
 it ; for when this great Work (as they call it) is
 done, there is nothing more appears to be done than
 if there were no Miracle : Now such a Miracle as
 to all appearance is no Miracle, I see no reason why
 a Protestant Minister, as well as a Popish Priest,
 may not work as often as he pleases ; or if he can
 have but the patience to let it alone, it will work it
 self. For surely nothing in the World is easier than
 to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few
 words over it to make it just what it was before.
 Every Man, every day, may work ten thousand
 such Miracles.

And thus I have dispatch'd the first part of my
 Discourse, which was to consider the pretended
 Grounds and *Reasons* of the Church of Rome for
 this Doctrine, and to shew the weakness and insuffi-
 ciency of them. I come in the

SECOND Place to produce our *Objections* a-
 gainst it. Which will be of so much the greater
 force, because I have already shewn this Doctrine
 to be destitute of all Divine Warrant and Authori-
 ty, and of any other sort of ground sufficient in Rea-
 son to justify it. So that I do not now object against

a Doctrine which has a fair probability of Divine SERM. Revelation on its side, for that would weigh down XXVI. all Objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its Divine Revelation: But I object against a Doctrine by the mere Will and Tyranny of Men impos'd upon the belief of Christians, without *any* evidence of *Scripture*, and against *all* the evidence of *Reason* and *Sense*.

The Objections I shall reduce to these *two* Heads. *First*, The infinite Scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion. And, *Secondly*, The monstrous and insupportable Absurdity of it.

First, The infinite Scandal of this Doctrine to the Christian Religion. And that upon these *four* accounts: 1. Of the Supidity of this Doctrine. 2. The real Barbarousness of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion upon supposition of the truth of this Doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody Consequences of it. 4. Of the Danger of Idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this Doctrine be not true. 1. Upon account of *the Stupidity of this Doctrine*. I remember that *Tully*, who was a Man of very good sense, instanceth in the Conceit of *eating God* as the extremity of Madness, and so stupid an apprehension as he thought no Man was ever guilty of. * *When we call*, says he, *the fruits of the Earth* * De Nat. Ceres, and *Wine* Bacchus, *we use but the common Lan-* Deorum. *guage; but do you think any Man so mad as to believe* 1. 3. *that which he eats to be God?* It seems he could not believe that so extravagant a Folly had ever entred into the Mind of Man. It is a very severe saying of *Averroes* the *Arabian* Philosopher (who lived after this Doctrine was entertained among *Christians*) and ought to make the Church of *Rome* blush, if she can; *I have travell'd*, says he, *over the World, and have* Dionys. *found divers Sects; but so sottish a Sect or Law I never* Carhus. *found, as is the Sect of the Christians; because with* in 4. dist. *their own Teeth they devour their God whom they wor-* 10. art. 1. *ship.* It was great Stupidity in the People of *Israel* to

SERM. to say, *Come let us make us Gods*; but it was civilly
 XXVI. said of them, *Let us make us Gods that may go before*
 ~~~~~ *us*, in comparison of the Church of Rome, who say,  
*Let us make a God that we may eat him.* So that up-  
 on the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they  
 should chuse thus to expose faith to the contempt of  
 all that are endued with Reason. And to speak  
 the plain truth, the Christian Religion was never so  
 horribly exposed to the Scorn of Atheists and Infi-  
 dels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless  
 \* 2 Theff. Doctrine. But thus it was foretold that \* *the Man*  
 2. 10. *of Sin* should come *with power and signs and lying mi-*  
*racles, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness,*  
*with all the Legerdemain and juggling Tricks of Fal-*  
*shood and Imposture*; amongst which this of *Tran-*  
*substantiation*, which they call a *Miracle*, and we a  
*Cheat*, is one of the chief: And in all probability  
 those common *juggling Words of Hocus-pocus*, are  
 nothing else but a corruption of *Hoc est corpus*, by  
 way of ridiculous imitation of the Priests of the  
 Church of Rome in their *Trick of Transubstantiation*.  
 Into such contempt by this foolish Doctrine and pre-  
 tended Miracle of theirs have they brought the most  
 sacred and venerable Mystery of our Religion.

2. It is very scandalous likewise upon account of  
 the real *Barbarousness* of this Sacrament and Rite of  
 our Religion, upon supposition of the truth of this  
 Doctrine. Literally to *eat the Flesh of the Son of*  
*man and to drink his Blood*, St. Austin, as I have shewed  
 before, declares to be a great *Impiety*. And the im-  
 piety and barbarousness of the thing is not in truth  
 extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its be-  
 ing done under the *Species of Bread and Wine*: For  
 the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they  
 believe that they verily eat and drink the natural  
 Flesh and Blood of Christ, and what can any Man do  
 more unworthily towards his Friend? How can he  
 possibly use him more barbarously, than to feast up-  
 on his living Flesh and Blood? It is one of the great-  
 est

est wonders in the World, that it should ever enter SERM.  
 into the minds of Men to put upon our Saviour's XXVI.  
 Words, so easily capable of a more convenient Sense, and so necessarily requiring it, a Meaning so plainly contrary to Reason and Sense, and even to Humanity itself. Had the ancient Christians owned any such Doctrine, we should have heard it from the Adversaries of our Religion in every page of their Writings; and they would have desired no greater advantage against the Christians than to have been able to hit them in the Teeth with their feasting upon the natural Flesh and Blood of their Lord, and their God, and their best Friend. What endless Triumphs would they have made upon this Subject? And with what confidence would they have set the Cruelty used by Christians in their *Sacrament*, against their God *Saturn's* eating his own Children, and all the cruel and bloody Rites of their Idolatry? But that no such thing was then objected by the *Heathens* to the *Christians*, is to a wise Man instead of a thousand Demonstrations that no such Doctrine was then believed.

3. It is scandalous also upon account of the *cruel and bloody consequences* of this Doctrine; so contrary to the plain Laws of Christianity, and to one great end and design of this Sacrament, which is to unite Christians in the most perfect Love and Charity to one another: Whereas this Doctrine hath been the occasion of the most barbarous and bloody Tragedies that ever were acted in the World. For this hath been in the Church of *Rome* the great *burning Article*: And as absurd and unreasonable as it is, more Christians have been murdered for the denial of it than perhaps for all the other Articles of their Religion. And I think it may generally pass for a true observation, That all Sects are commonly most hot and furious for those things for which there is least Reason: For what Men want of Reason for their Opinions, they usually supply and make up in Rage.  
 And



SERM. And it was no more than needed to use this severity  
 XXVI. upon this occasion; for nothing but the cruel fear of  
 ~~~~~ Death could in probability have driven so great a part  
 of Mankind into the acknowledgment of so unreasonable and senseless a Doctrine.

O *Blessed Saviour!* thou best Friend and greatest Lover of Mankind, who can imagine thou didst ever intend that Men should kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their senses; for being unwilling to think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main Duty and principal Mystery of thy Religion; for not flattering the Pride and presumption of the Priest, who says he can make God, and for not complying with the Folly and Stupidity of the People who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of *Idolatry*; which they are certainly guilty of if this Doctrine be not true, and such a change as they pretend, be not made in the Sacrament; for if it be not, then they worship a Creature instead of the Creator, God blessed for ever. But such a change I have shewn to be impossible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and consequently are always in danger of idolatry: and that they can never be certain that such a change is made, is evident; because, according to the express determination of the Council of *Trent*, that depends upon the Mind and *intention of the Priest*, which cannot certainly be known but by Revelation, which is not pretended in this case. And if they be mistaken in this change, through the knavery or crossness of the Priest who will not *make God* but when he thinks fit, they must not think to excuse themselves from Idolatry because they intended to worship God and not a Creature; for so the *Persians* might be excus'd from idolatry in worshipping the *Sun*, because they intend to worship God and not a Creature; and so indeed we may excuse all the

Idolatry

Idolatry that ever was in the World, which is no-SERM. thing else but a mistake of the Deity, and upon that XXVI. mistake a worshipping of something as God which is not God.

II. Besides the infinite scandal of this Doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, *the monstrous absurdities* of it make it insupportable to any Religion. I am very well assur'd of the grounds of Religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular; and yet I cannot see that the foundations of any revealed Religion, are strong enough to bear the weight of so many and so great absurdities as this Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* would load it withal. And to make this evident, I shall not insist upon those gross Contradictions, of the same Body being in so many several Places at once; of our Saviour's giving away himself with his own Hands to every one of his Disciples, and yet still keeping himself to himself; and a thousand more of the like nature: but to shew the absurdity of this Doctrine, I shall only ask these few Questions:

1. Whether any Man have, or ever had, greater Evidence of the truth of any Divine Revelation than every Man hath of the falshood of *Transubstantiation*? Infidelity were hardly possible to Men, if all Men had the same evidence for the Christian Religion which they have against *Transubstantiation*, that is, the clear and irresistible Evidence of Sense. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his senses, is at an end of certainty; for what can a Man be certain of if he be not certain of what he sees? In some circumstances our senses may deceive us, but no Faculty, deceives us so little and so seldom: And when our senses do deceive us, even that error is not to be corrected without the help of our Senses.

2. Supposing this Doctrine had been delivered in Scripture in the very same Words that it is decreed

SERM. creed in the Council of *Trent*, by what clearer evidence or stronger Argument could any Man prove
 XXVI. to me that such Words were in the Bible, than I can prove to him that Bread and Wine after consecration are Bread and Wine still? He could but appeal to my Eyes to prove such Words to be in the Bible, and with the same Reason and Justice might I appeal to several of his Senses to prove to him that the Bread and Wine after Consecration are Bread and Wine still.

3. Whether it be reasonable to imagine that God should make that a part of the Christian Religion, which shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the Miracles which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, the assurance whereof did at first depend upon the certainty of Sense. For if the Senses of those who say they saw them were deceived, then there might be no Miracles wrought; and consequently it may justly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which God hath given to the Christian Religion, would be strong enough to prove it, supposing *Transubstantiation* to be a part of it: Because every Man hath as great evidence that *Transubstantiation* is false, as he hath that the Christian Religion is true. Suppose then *Transubstantiation* to be part of the Christian Doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is Miracles: But of all Doctrines in the World it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which any Man hath of the truth of the Miracle he hath of the falshood of the Doctrine, that is, the clear Evidence of his Senses. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove *that what he sees in the Sacrament is not Bread but the Body of Christ*, there is only the evidence of Sense; and there is the very same Evidence to prove *that what*

he sees in the Sacrament is not the Body of Christ but **SERM. XXVI.**
Bread. So that here would arise a new Controversy, whether a Man should rather believe his Senses giving Testimony against the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or bearing witness to a Miracle wrought to confirm that Doctrine; there being the very same Evidence against the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle: And then the Argument for *Transubstantiation* and the Objection against it would just ballance one another; and consequently *Transubstantiation* is not to be proved by a Miracle, because that would be, *to prove to a Man by something that he sees, that he doth not see what he sees.* And if there were no other Evidence than *Transubstantiation* is no part of the Christian Doctrine, this would be sufficient, that what proves the one, doth as much overthrow the other; and that Miracles which are certainly the best and highest external proof of Christianity, are the worst proof in the World of *Transubstantiation*, unless a Man can renounce his Senses at the same time that he relies upon them. For a Man cannot believe a Miracle without relying upon Sense, nor *Transubstantiation* without renouncing it. So that never were any two things so ill coupled together as the Doctrine of Christianity and that of *Transubstantiation*, because they draw several ways, and are ready to strangle one another: For the main Evidence of the Christian Doctrine, which is Miracles, is resolved into the certainty of Sense, but this Evidence is clear and point blank against *Transubstantiation*.

4. And *Lastly*, I would ask what we are to think of the Argument which our Saviour used to convince his Disciples after his Resurrection that his Body was really risen, and that they were not deluded by a Ghost or Apparition? it is a necessary and conclusive Argument or not? *Luke 24. 38, 39. and he said unto them, Why are ye troubled; and why do thoughts arise*

SERM. arise in your hearts? behold my Hands and my Feet that
XXVI. it is I my self; for a Spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you

see me have. But now if we suppose with the Church of Rome the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* to be true and that he had instructed his Disciples in it just before his Death, strange Thoughts might justly have risen in their hearts, and they might have said to him; Lord, it is but a few days ago since thou didst teach us not to believe our senses, but directly contrary to what we saw, viz. that the Bread which thou gavest us in the Sacrament, though we saw it and handled it and tasted it to be Bread, yet was not Bread, but thine own natural Body; and now thou appealest to our senses, to prove that this is thy Body which we now see. If seeing and handling be an unquestionable Evidence that things are what they appear to our senses, then we were deceived before in the Sacrament, and if they be not, then we are not sure now that this is thy Body which we now see and handle, but it may be perhaps Bread under the appearance of Flesh and Bones; just as in the Sacrament, that which we saw and handled and tasted to be Bread was thy Flesh and Bones under the form and appearance of Bread. Now upon this supposition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of his Disciples: For if the Argument which our Saviour used did certainly prove to them that what they saw and handled was his Body, his very natural Flesh and Bones, because they saw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as strongly prove that what they saw and received before in the Sacrament was not the natural Body and Blood of *Christ*, but real Bread and Wine. And consequently, that according to our Saviour's arguing after his Resurrection they had no reason to believe *Transubstantiation* before. For that very Argument by which our Saviour proves the reality of his Body after his Resurrection doth as strongly prove

prove the reality of Bread and Wine after Consecra-
 tion. But our Saviour's Argument was most infal-
 libly good and true, and therefore the Doctrine of
Transubstantiation is undoubtedly false.

Upon the whole matter I shall only say this, that
 some other Points between us and the Church of
Rome are managed by some kind of wit and subtil-
 lity, but this of *Transubstantiation* is carried out
 by meer dint of impudence and facing down of
 Mankind.

And of this the more discerning Persons of that
 Church are of late grown so sensible that they would
 now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous
 Doctrine. But the Council of *Trent* hath rivetted it
 so fast into their Religion, and made it so necessary
 and essential a Point of their belief, that they cannot
 now part with it if they would; it is like a Mill-stone
 hung about the Neck of Popery, which will sink it
 at the last.

And though some of their greatest Wits, as Car-
 dinal *Perron*, and of late Monsieur *Arnauld*, have
 undertaken the defence of it in great Volumes; yet
 it is an absurdity of that monstrous and massy weight,
 that no Human Authority or Wit are able to support
 it. It will make the very Pillars of *St. Peter's* crack,
 and requires more Volumes to make it good than
 would fill the *Vatican*.

And now I would apply my self to the poor de-
 luded People of that Church, if they were either
 permitted by their Priests, or durst venture without
 their leave, to look into their Religion and to ex-
 amine the Doctrines of it. Consider, and shew your
 selves Men. Do not suffer yourselves any longer to
 be led blindfold, and by an implicit Faith in your
 Priests, into the belief of nonsense and contradiction.
 Think it enough and too much to let them rook
 you out of your money for pretended Pardons and
 counterfeit Reliques, but let not the Authority of
 any Priest or Church persuade you out of your Senses.

SERM. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as Infidelity.
 XXVI. And he who said, *Blessed are they that have not seen*
 and yet have believed; hath now here said, *Blessed are*
they that have seen and yet have not believed; much less
Blessed are they that believe directly contrary to what
they see.

To conclude this Discourse. By what hath been
 said upon this Argument it will appear, with how
 little Truth, and Reason, and regard to the inter-
 est of our common Christianity, it is so often said
 by our Adversaries, that there are as good Argu-
 ments for the belief of *Transubstantiation* as of the
 Doctrine of the *Trinity*: When they themselves do
 acknowledge with us that the Doctrine of the *Trin-*
ity is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that ac-
 cording to the Interpretation of them by the consent
 of the ancient Fathers: But their Doctrine of *Tran-*
substantiation I have plainly shewn to have no
 such Ground, and that this is acknowledged by very
 many learned Men of their own Church. And the
 Doctrine of theirs being first plainly proved by us to
 be destitute of all Divine Warrant and Authority, our
 Objections against it from the manifold contradic-
 tions of it to Reason and Sense, are so many De-
 monstrations of the falshood of it. Against all
 which they have nothing to put in the opposite Scale
 but the Infallibility of their Church, for which
 there is even less colour of proof from Scripture
 than for *Transubstantiation* it self. But so fond are
 they of their own Innovations and Errors, that ra-
 ther than the Dictates of their Church, how ground-
 less and absurd soever, should be call'd in question
 rather than not have their will of us in imposing up-
 on us what they please, they will overthrow any
 Article of the Christian Faith, and shake the very
 foundations of our common Religion: A clear Evi-
 dence that the Church of *Rome* is not the true Mother
 since she can be so well contented that Christianity

should

should be destroyed rather than the Point in question
should be decided against her.

SERMON XXVII.

The Protestant RELIGION Vindicated,
from the Charge of Singularity
and Novelty.

Preach'd before the KING at *White-Hall*,
April 2. 1680.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
choose you this day whom you will serve.*

THESE are the Words of *Joshua* ; who SERM.
after he had brought the People of *Israel* XXVII.
through many difficulties and hazards into
the quiet possession of the promised Land,
like a good Prince and Father of his Country, was
very solicitous, before his Death, to lay the firmest
foundation he could devise of the future happiness and
prosperity of that People, in whose present settle-
ment he had, by the blessing of God, been so success-
ful an Instrument.

And because he knew no means so effectual to this
end, as to confirm them in the Religion and Wor-
ship of the true God, who had by so remarkable
and miraculous a Providence planted them in that
good Land ; he summons the People together, and
represents to them all those considerations that might

SERM. engage them and their Posterity for ever, to continue in the true Religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promised to do more if they would be faithful to him. And on the other hand, what fearful Calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them in case they should transgress his Covenant, and go and serve other Gods. And after many Arguments to this purpose, he concludes with this earnest Exhortation at the 14th verse, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this Exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of insinuation as it were once more set them at liberty and leave them to their own election: It being the nature of Man to stick more stedfastly to that which is not violently imposed, but is our own free and deliberate choice: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; chuse you this day, whom you will serve.*

Which Words offer to our consideration these following Observations.

1. *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.* Joshua does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. *That though Religion be a matter of choice yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it self, nor to a great Governor, what Religion his People are of:* Joshua does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they served God or Idols; he had sufficiently declared before which of these was to be preferred.

3. *The true Religion may have several prejudices and objections against it:* If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, intimating that upon some accounts and to some Persons, it may appear so.

4. *That the true Religion hath those real advantages* SERM.
on its side, that it may safely be referr'd to any consi- XXVII.
derate Man's choice. And this seems to be the true
Reason why *Joshua* refers it to them. Not that
he thought the thing indifferent, but because he was
fully satisfied that the truth and goodness of the one
above the other was so evident, that there was
no danger that any prudent Man should make a
wrong choice. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the*
Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve ; intima-
ting that the plain difference of the things in compe-
tition would direct them what to chuse.

5. *The Example of Princes and Governors hath a*
very great influence upon the People in matters of Re-
ligion. This I collect from the Context : And
Joshua was sensible of it ; and therefore though he
firmly believed the true Religion to have those ad-
vantages that would certainly reccommend it to e-
very impartial Man's judgment, yet knowing that
the multitude are easily impos'd upon and led into
error, he thought fit to incline and determine them
by his own example, and by declaring his own pe-
remptory resolution in the case, *Chuse you this day*
whom you will serve ; as for me, I and my house
will serve the Lord. Laws are a good security to
Religion ; but the Example of Governors is a
living Law, which secretly over-rules the Minds of
Men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

— *Non sic inflectere sensus*
humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.

The Lives and Actions of Princes have usually a
greater sway upon the minds of the People than their
Laws.

All these Observations are I think very natural, and
very considerable. I shall not be able to speak to
them all ; But shall proceed so far as the time and
our patience will give me leave.

SERM.

XXVII.

First, *It is here supposed that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.* Joshua does not put it to their choice whether they would worship any Deity at all: That had been too wild and extravagant a supposition, and which it is likely in those days had never enter'd into any Man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all People will be of some Religion; and then offers it to their consideration which they would pitch upon, *Chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the Gods which your Fathers served, &c.*

Religion is a thing to which Men are not only formed by Education and Custom, but, as Tully says, *Quo omnes duce natura vehimur*, It is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true Reason why some Religion or other hath so universally prevailed in all Ages and Places of the World.

The temporal felicity of Men, and the ends of Government can very hardly, if at all be attained without Religion. Take away this, and all Obligations of Conscience cease; and where there is no Obligation of Conscience, all security of Truth and Justice and mutual Confidence among Men is at an end. For why should I repose confidence in that Man, why should I take his Word or believe his Promise, or put any of my Interests and Concernments into his Power, who hath no other restraint upon him but that of human Laws, and is at liberty in his own Mind and Principles to do whatever he judgeth to be expedient for his Interest, provided he can but do it without Danger to himself? So that declar'd Atheism and Infidelity do justly bring Men under jealousy and suspicion with all Mankind; and every wise Man hath reason to be upon his guard against those, from whom he hath no cause to expect more Justice, Truth and Equity in their dealings, than he can compel them to by the meer dint and force of Laws. For by declar-

ring themselves free from all other Obligations, SERM. they give us fair warning what we are to expect at XXVII. their hands, and how far we may trust them. Religion is the strongest Band of Humane Society; and God so necessary to the welfare and happiness of Mankind, as it could not have been more, if we could suppose the Being of God himself to have been purposely designed and contrived for the Benefit and Advantage of Men: So that very well may it be taken for granted, that a Nation must be of some Religion or other.

Secondly, *Though Religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itself, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his People are of.* Notwithstanding the supposition of the Text, *Joshua* doth not leave them at liberty whether they will serve God or Idols: But by a very rhetorical Scheme of Speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worship of the true God.

To countenance and support the true Religion, and to take care that the People be instructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and seduce Men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magistrate. This Power the Kings of *Israel* always exercised, not only with Allowance, but with great Approbation and Commendation from God himself. And the case is not altered since Christianity; The better the Religion is, the better it deserves the countenance and support of the Civil Authority. And this Power of the Civil Magistrate in matters of Religion was never called in question, but by the *Enthusiasts* of these latter times: And yet among these, every Father and Master of a Family claims this Power over his Children and Servants, at the same time that they deny it to the Magistrate over his Subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lies. Hath a Master of a Family more Power over those under his Government than the Magistrate hath? No Man ever pretended it: Nay, so

SERM. far is it from that, that the natural Authority of a
 XXVII. Father may be, and often is, limited and restrained
 by the Laws of the Civil Magistrate. And why
 then may not a Magistrate exercise the same Power
 over his Subjects in Matters of Religion, which
 every Master challengeth to himself in his own Fa-
 mily? that is, to establish the true Worship of God
 in such manner and with such circumstances as he
 thinks best, and to permit none to affront it, or to
 seduce from it those that are under his care: And to
 prevent all misunderstandings in this matter, I do
 not hereby ascribe any thing to the Magistrate that
 can possibly give him any pretence of right to re-
 ject God's true Religion, or to declare what he
 pleases to be so, and what Books he pleases to be
Canonical and *the Word of God*; and consequently to
 make a false Religion so current by the stamp of his
 Authority, as to oblige his Subjects to the profession
 of it: Because he who acknowledgeth himself to de-
 rive all his Authority from God, can pretend to none
 against Him. But if a false Religion be established
 by Law, the case here is the same as in all other
 Laws that are sinful in the matter of them, but yet
 made by a lawful Authority; in this case the Subject
 is not bound to profess a false Religion, but patient-
 ly to suffer for the constant profession of the true.

And to speak freely in this matter, I cannot think
 (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready
 to be) that any pretence of Conscience warrants any
 Man, that is not extraordinarily commission'd, as
 the Apostles and first publishers of the Gospel were,
 and cannot justify that Commission by Miracles as
 they did, to affront the established Religion of a Na-
 tion (though it be false) and openly to draw Men off
 from the Profession of it in contempt of the Ma-
 gistrate and the Law: All that Persons of a different
 Religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is
 to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own
 Conscience and Religion; for which they ought to be

be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of SERM. XXVII.
 Profelytes to their own Religion, (though they be never so sure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary Commission from God to that purpose, or the Providence of God make way for it by the permission or connivance of the Magistrate. Not but that every Man hath a *Right* to publish and propagate the true Religion, and to declare it against a false one; but there is no *Obligation* upon any Man to attempt this to no purpose, and when without a Miracle it can have no other effect but the loss of his own Life; unless he have an immediate Command and Commission from God to this purpose, and be endued with a power of Miracles, as a publick Seal and Testimony of that Commission, which was the case of the *Apostles*, who after they had received an immediate Commission were not to enter upon the execution of it, but to *stay at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high*. In this case a Man is to abide all hazards, and may reasonably expect both extraordinary Assistance and success, as the *Apostles* had; and even a miraculous Protection till his Work be done; and after that if he be call'd to suffer Martyrdom, a supernatural Support under those Sufferings.

And that they are guilty however of gross Hypocrisy who pretend a further obligation of Conscience in this matter, I shall give this plain Demonstration, which relies upon Concessions generally made on all hands, and by all parties. No Protestant (that I know of) holds himself obliged to go and preach up his Religion and make Converts in *Spain* or *Italy*: Nor do either the *Protestant* Ministers, or *Popish* Priests think themselves bound in Conscience to preach the Gospel in *Turky*, and to confute the *Alchoran*, to convert the *Mahometans*. And what is the Reason? Because of the Severity of the Inquisition in *Popish* Countries, and of the Laws in *Turky*. But doth the danger then alter the obligation

SERM. tion of Conscience? No, certainly; but it makes
 XXVII. Men throw off the false pretence and disguise of it:
 but where there is a real obligation of Conscience, danger should not deter Men from their Duty, as it did not the Apostles: Which shews their case to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was stated right at first. So that whatever is pretended, this is certain, that the Priests and Jesuits of the Church of *Rome* have in truth no more obligation of Conscience to make Converts here in *England* than in *Sweden* or *Turky*; where it seems the evident danger of the Attempt hath for these many Years given them a perfect discharge from their Duty in this particular. I shall join the

Third and Fourth Observations together. That Though the true Religion may have several Prejudices and Objections against it, yet upon Examination there will be found those real Advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any considerate Man's choice: If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you; intimating, that to some Persons, and upon some accounts, it may appear so. But when the matter is truly represented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation. Chuse you this day whom you will serve. Let but the Cause be fully and impartially heard, and a wise Man may determine himself upon the spot, and give his Verdict without ever going from the Bar.

The true Religion hath always lain under some Prejudices with partial and inconsiderate Men; which commonly spring from one of these *two* Causes, either the *prepossessions of a contrary Religion*, or the *contrariety of the true Religion to the vicious Inclinations and Practices of Men*, which usually lies at the bottom of all Prejudice against Religion. Religion is an Enemy to Mens beloved Lusts, and therefore they are Enemies to Religion. I begin with the *first*, which is as much as I shall be able to compass at this time.

I. *The Prepossessions of a false Religion* ; which SERM. commonly pretends *two* Advantages on its side, *Antiquity* and *Universality* ; and is wont to object to the true Religion *Novelty* and *Singularity*. And *both* these are intimated both before and after the Text : *Put away the gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt : And chuse you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the Religion of their Fathers, and had spread it self over the greatest and most ancient Nations of the World, and the most famous for Learning and Arts, the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians* ; and was the Religion of the *Amorites*, and the Nations round about them. So that *Joshua* represents the *Heathen Religion* with all its strength and advantage, and does not dissemble its confident pretence to *Antiquity* and *Universality*, whereby they would also insinuate the *Novelty* and *Singularity* of the Worship of the God of *Israel*. And it is very well worthy our observation, that one or both of these have always been the Exceptions of false Religions (especially of *Idolatry* and *Superstition*) against the true Religion. The ancient Idolaters of the World pretended their Religion to be *ancient* and *universal*, that their Fathers served these Gods, and that the Worship of the God of *Israel* was a plain Innovation upon the *ancient* and *catholick Religion* of the World, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their Fathers ; and no doubt they were almost perpetually upon the *Jews* with that pert Question, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* and telling them that it was the Religion of a very small part and corner of the World, confined within a little Territory : But the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, famous for all kind of Knowledge and Wisdom, and indeed all the Nations round about them,

SERM. them, worshipped other gods; and therefore it was
 XXVII. an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to
 condemn their Fathers and all the World, to be of a
 Religion different from all other Nations, and hereby to separate themselves and make a *Schism* from the rest of Mankind.

And when the Gospel appeared in the World, which the Apostle to the *Hebrews* (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls *the time of Reformation*, the *Jews* and *Heathen* still renewed the same Objections against Christianity. The *Jews* urged against it, not the ancient *Scriptures* and the true Word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater Authority, the *unwritten Word*, the ancient and constant *Traditions* of their Church; and branded this new Religion with the name of Heresy, *After the way* (saith St. Paul) *that you call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets*: By which we see, that they of the Church of *Rome* were not the first who call'd it *Heresy* to reject human Traditions, and to make the *Scriptures*, the Rule of Faith: This was done long before by their reverend Predecessors, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*.

And the *Gentiles*, pretended against it both *Antiquity* and *Universality*, the constant belief and practice of all Ages, and almost all Places of the World; *Sequimur majores nostros qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, says *Symmachus*, *We follow our forefathers who happily followed theirs*; but you bring a new Religion, never known nor heard of in the World before.

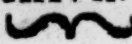
And when the Christian Religion was most miserably depraved and corrupted, in that dismal Night of Ignorance which over-spread these *western* Parts of the World about the *ninth* and *tenth Centuries*; and many pernicious Doctrines and superstitious Practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the Christian Religion, and making it quite another thing

thing from what our Saviour had left it ; and these SERM. Corruptions and Abuses had continued for several XXVII. Ages: No sooner was a *Reformation* attempted but the Church of *Rome* make the same out-cry of *Novelty* and *Singularity*: And though we have substantially answered it a thousand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare Question, *Where was your Religion before Luther?*

I shall therefore apply myself to answer these *two* Exceptions with all the brevity and clearness I can: And I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the Point of *Universality* (tho' that be no-wise necessary to justify the Truth of any Religion) ours is not inferior to theirs; if we take in the Christians of all Ages and of all parts of the World: And as to the Point of *Antiquity*, that our Faith and the Doctrines of our Religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all *our* Faith being unquestionably ancient, *theirs* not so.

1. As to the Point of *Universality*, which they of the Church of *Rome*, I know not for what Reason, will needs make an inseparable Property and Mark of the true Church. And they never flout at the Protestant Religion with so good a grace among the ignorant People, as when they are bragging of their Numbers, and despising poor Protestantism because embraced by so few. This *pestilent northern Heresy* (as of late they scornfully call it) is entertained it seems only in this cold and cloudy Corner of the World, by a company of dull stupid People, that can neither penetrate into the Proofs nor the Possibility of *Transubstantiation*; whereas to the more refined *southern* Wits all these difficult and obscure Points are as clear as their Sun at Noon-day.

But to speak to the thing itself. If Number be necessary to prove the Truth and goodness of any Religion, *ours* upon enquiry will be found not so inconsiderable as our Adversaries would make it. Those of the *reformed* Religion, according to the
most

SERM. XXVII.  most exact calculations that have been made by learned Men, being esteemed not much unequal in number to those of the *Romish* Persuasion. But then if we take in the ancient Christian Church, whose Faith was the same with ours; and other Christian Churches at this day, which altogether are vastly greater and more numerous than the *Roman* Church, and which agree with us, several of them in very considerable Doctrines and Practices in dispute between us and the Church of *Rome*, and all of them in disclaiming that fundamental Point of the *Roman* Religion, and *Summ of Christianity* (as *Bellarmino* calls it) I mean the *Supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all Christians and Churches in the World*, then the Number on our side will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not stand upon this advantage with them. Suppose we were by much the fewer. So hath the true Church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth of their Religion. What think we of the Church in *Abraham's* Time, which for ought we know was confined to one Family; and one small Kingdom, that of *Melchisedec* King of *Salem*? What think we of it in *Moses* his time, when it was confined to one People wandering in a Wilderness? What of it in *Elijah's* time, when besides the two Tribes that worshipped at *Jerusalem*, there were in the other *ten* but *seven thousand* that *had not bowed their knee to Baal*? What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Christian Church consisted of twelve Apostles, and seventy Disciples, and some few Followers beside? How would *Bellarmino* have despis'd this little Flock, because it wanted one or two of his goodliest Marks of the true Church, *Universality* and *Splendor*? And what think we of the Christian Church in the height of *Arianism* and *Pelagianism*, when a great part of *Christendom* was over-run with these Errors, and the number of the *Orthodox* was inconsiderable in comparison of the *Hereticks*?

But

But what need I to urge these Instances? As if the SERM.
 Truth of a Religion were to be estimated and car-XXVII.
 ried by the *major Vote*; which as it can be an Argu-
 ment to none but Fools, so I dare say no honest and
 wise Man ever made use of it for a solid Proof of the
 Truth and Goodness of any Church or Religion. If
 Multitude be an Argument that Men are in the
 right, in vain then hath the *Scripture* said, *thou*
shalt not follow a multitude to do evil: For if this Ar-
 gument be of any force, the greater Number never
 go wrong.

2. As to the Point of *Antiquity*. This is not al-
 ways a certain Mark of the true Religion. For
 surely there was a time when Christianity began and
 was a new Profession, and then both *Judaism* and
Paganism had certainly the advantage of it in point
 of Antiquity: But the proper Question in this case
 is, *Which is the true ancient Christian Faith, that of*
the Church of Rome or ours? And to make this
 matter plain, it is to be considered, that a great
 part of the *Roman Faith* is the same with *Ours*: as
 namely, the Articles of the Apostles *Creed*, as ex-
 plained by the first four general Councils. And
 these make up our whole Faith, so far as concerns
 matters of meer and simple Belief, that are of ab-
 solute necessity to Salvation. And in this Faith of
 ours, there is nothing wanting that can be shewn in
 any ancient *Creed* of the Christian Church. And
 thus far *our Faith*, and *theirs* of the *Roman Church*,
 are undoubtedly of equal Antiquity, that is, as an-
 tient as Christianity itself.

All the Question, is, as to the matters in diffe-
 rence between us. The principal whereof are the
 twelve new Articles of the Creed of Pope *Pius IV.*
 concerning the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, *Transubstantia-*
tion, the *Communion in one kind only*, *Purgatory*, &c.
 not one of which is to be found in any ancient *Creed*
 or Confession of Faith generally allowed in the Christi-
 an Church. The Antiquity of these we deny, and
 affirm

SERM. affirm them to be Innovations ; and have particular.
 XXVII. ly proved them to be so, not only to the answer.
 ing, but almost to the silencing of our Adversaries.

And as for the *negative* Articles of the *Protestant* Religion, in opposition to the Errors and Corruptions of the *Romish* Faith, these are by accident become a part of our Faith and Religion, occasioned by their Errors ; as the renouncing of the Doctrines of *Arianism* became part of the *Catholick* Religion, after the rise of that Heresy.

So that the Case is plainly this ; We believe and teach all that is contained in the *Creeds* of the ancient Christian Church, and was by them esteemed necessary to Salvation : And this is our Religion. But now the Church of *Rome* hath innovated in the Christian Religion, and made several Additions to it ; and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it ; And these *Additions* and *Corruptions* are their Religion, as it is distinct from ours ; and both because they are *Corruptions* and *Novelties* we have rejected them : And our rejection of these is our Reformation ; and our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be so ancient as their Corruptions : All Reformation necessarily supposing Corruptions and Errors to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leisure to answer that captious Question of theirs, *Where was your Religion before Luther* ? Where-ever Christianity was ; in some places more pure, in others more corrupted ; but especially in these *western* parts of Christendom over-grown for several Ages with manifold Errors and Corruptions, which the Reformation hath happily cut off, and cast away. So that though our *Reformation* was as late as *Luther*, our *Religion* is as ancient as Christianity itself. For when the *Additions* which the Church of *Rome* hath made to the *ancient* Christian Faith, and their Innovations in Practice are pared off, that which remains of *their*
 Religion

Religion is *ours*; and *this* they cannot deny to be every title of it the ancient Christianity. SERM.
XXVII.

And what other Answer than this could the *Jews* have given to the like Question, if it had been put to them by the *ancient Idolaters* of the World, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* but the very same in substance which we now give to the Church of *Rome*? That for many Ages the Worship of the one true God had been corrupted, and the Worship of Idols had prevailed in a great part of the World; that *Abraham* was raised up by God to reform Religion, and to reduce the Worship of God to its first Institution; in the doing whereof he necessarily separated Himself and his Family from the Communion of those Idolaters. So that though the *Reformation* which *Abraham* began was new, yet his *Religion* was truly ancient; as old as that of *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and *Adam*. Which is the same in substance that we say, and with the same and equal Reason.

And if they will still complain of the *Newness* of our *Reformation*, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however better late than never. Besides, it ought to be considered, that this Objection of *Novelty* lies against all Reformation whatsoever, though never so necessary, and though things be never so much amiss: And it is in effect to say, that if things be once bad, they must never be better, but must always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a Reformation must begin some time, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real Reformation be made, the thing justifies itself; and no objection of *Novelty* ought to take place against that which upon all accounts was so just and necessary to be done. And if they of the Church of *Rome* would but speak their Mind out in this matter, they are not so much displeased at the Reformation which we have made because it is *new*,

SERM. as because it is a *Reformation*. It was the humor
 XXVII. of *Babylon* of old (as the *Prophet* tells us, *Jer. 5*
 9.) that she *would not be healed*; and this is still the
 temper of the Church of *Rome*, they *bate to be re-*
formed; and rather than acknowledge themselves
 have been once in an Error, they will continue
 it for ever. And this is that which at first made
 and still continues, the Breach and *Separation* between
 us; of which we are no-wise guilty who have once
 reformed what was amiss, but they who obstinately
 persist in their Errors, and will needs impose them
 upon us, and will not let us be of their Communion
 unless we will say they are no Errors.

II. The other *Prejudice* against the true Religion
 is, *the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and*
practices of Men.

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a
 straint upon human nature. And this is that which
 in truth lies at the bottom of all Objections against
 Religion, *Men love darkness rather than light because*
their deeds are evil.

But this Argument will require a Discourse by
 itself, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it,
 only crave your patience a little longer, whilst I
 make some Reflections upon what hath been already
 delivered.

You see what are the *Exceptions* which Idolatry
 and Superstition have always made, and do at this
 day still make, against the true Religion; and how
 slight and insignificant they are.

But do we then charge the Church of *Rome* with
 Idolatry? Our Church most certainly does so,
 hath always done it from the beginning of the
 Reformation; in her *Homilies* and *Liturgy*, and in her
Confessions, and in the *Writings* of her best and ablest
 Divines. And though I have, as impartially as I could
 considered what hath been said on both sides of
 this Controversy; yet I must confess, I could not
 yet see any tolerable defence made by them against

this heavy Charge. And they themselves acknowledge SERM. themselves to be greatly under the suspicion of it, by XXVII. saying (as Cardinal *Perron* and others do) that the Primitive Christians for some Ages did neither worship Images, nor pray to Saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the Heathen Idolatry: And, which is yet more, divers of their most learned Men do confess, that if *Transubstantiation* be not true, they are as gross Idolaters as any in the World. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in compliment to them, and to acquit them from the charge of Idolatry, we should presently deny our Senses, and believe *Transubstantiation*; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have reason to charge them with Idolatry.

But we own them to be a true Church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of Idolatry: This they often urge us withal, and there seems at first sight to be something in it: And for that reason I shall endeavour to give so clear and satisfactory an Answer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, because they still retain the Essentials of Christianity, and profess to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, that notwithstanding their Corruptions they may still retain the true Essence of a Church: As a Man may be truly and really a Man, though he have the Plague upon him; and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves: But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to push the matter home; Are they sure that this is a firm and good Consequence, That *if they be Idolaters, they cannot be a true Church*? Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themselves a true Church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not understand it of themselves, it is fit they should be told that there is a great difference between Concessions of Charity and

SERM. of Necessity, and that a very different use ought to
 XXVII. be made of them. We are willing to think the
 best of them ; but if they dislike our Charity in this
 point, nothing against the hair : If they will forgive
 us this Injury, we will not offend them any more :
 But rather than have any farther difference with
 them about this matter, we will for quietness sake
 compound it thus ; That till they can clearly acquit
 themselves from being idolaters, they shall never
 more against their wills be esteemed a true Church.

And now to draw to a conclusion.

*If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, and to
 worship him only ; to pray to him alone, and that
 only in the Name and Mediation of Jesus Christ,
 as he hath given us Commandment ; because there is
 but one God, and one Mediator between God and Man,
 The Man Christ Jesus : If it seem evil unto you, to
 have the Liberty to serve God in a Language you
 can understand ; and to have the free use of the Ho-
 ly Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto
 Salvation ; and to have the Sacraments of our Re-
 ligion entirely administred to us, as our Lord did
 institute and appoint :*

And on the other hand, if it seem good to us, to put
 our Necks once more under that Yoke which our Fa-
 thers were not able to bear : If it be really a Prefer-
 ment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a
 Privilege to be deposed by him at his pleasure, and a
 Courtesy to be kill'd at his Command : If to pray
 without Understanding, and to obey without Reason,
 and to believe against Sense ; if Ignorance, and im-
 plicit Faith, and an Inquisition, be in good earnest
 such charming and desirable things : Then welcome
 Popery ; which, where ever thou comest, dost in-
 fallibly bring all these wonderful Privileges and
 Blessings along with thee.

But, the Question is not now about the Choice
 but the Change of our Religion, after we have been
 so long settled in the quiet possession and enjoyment
 of

of it. Men are very loth to change even a false Re-^{SERM.}ligion. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet* ^{XXVII.}*are no Gods?* And surely there is much more reason why we should be tenacious of the Truth, and hold fast that which is good.

We have the best Religion in the World, the very same which the *Son of God* revealed, which the *Apostles* planted and confirmed by Miracles, and which the noble *Army of Martyrs* sealed with their Blood: And we have retrench'd from it all false Doctrines and superstitious Practices, which have been added since. And I think we may without immodesty say, That upon the plain square of Scripture and Reason, of the Tradition and Practice of the first and best Ages of the Christian Church, we have fully justified *Our* Religion; and made it evident to the World, that our Adversaries are put to very hard shifts, and upon a perpetual disadvantage in the defence of *Theirs*.

I wish it were as easy for us to justify our Lives as our Religion. I do not mean in comparison of our Adversaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in comparison of the Rules of our holy *Religion*, from which we are infinitely swerv'd; which I would to God we all did seriously consider and lay to heart: I say in comparison of the Rules of our Holy Religion which *teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, in expectation of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.*

S E R M O N XXVIII.

Objections against the True RELIGION
Answer'd.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

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THESE Words, as I have already declared in the former Discourse, are the last Counsel and Advice which *Joshua* gave to the People of *Israel*, after he had safely conducted them into the Land of *Canaan*. And that he might the more effectually persuade them to continue stedfast in the Worship of the true God, by an eloquent kind of Insinuation he doth as it were once more set them at liberty and leave them to their own choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve.*

The plain sense of which words may be resolved into this *Proposition*, That notwithstanding all the Prejudices and Objections against the true Religion, yet it hath those real Advantages on its side that it may safely be referred to any impartial and considerate man's choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord*; intimating, that to some persons, and upon some accounts, it may seem so: but when the matter is thoroughly examined, the resolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, *Chuse you, this day whom you will serve.*

The

The true Religion hath always lain under some SERM. XXVIII.
 Prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men, arising
 chiefly from these *two* Causes; the *Prepossessions of a*
false Religion; and the *contrariety of the true Religi-*
on to the Inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in
point of practice.

First, From the Prepossessions of a false Religion;
 which hath always been wont to lay claim to *Anti-*
quity and Universality, and to charge the true Reli-
 gion with *Novelty and Singularity*. And both these
 are intimated before the Text; *Put away the Gods*
whom your Fathers served on the other side of the flood
and in Egypt, and chuse you this day whom you will
serve. It was pretended that the worship of Idols
 was the ancient Religion of the World, of those
 great Nations the *Egyptians and Chaldeans*, and of
 all the Nations round about them. But this hath al-
 ready been considered at large.

Secondly, There are another sort of Prejudices a-
 gainst Religion, more apt to stick with Men of bet-
 ter sense and reason; and these arise principally from
the contrariety of the true Religion to the Inclinations of
men, and the uneasiness of it in Point of Practice. It
 is pretended that Religion is a heavy Yoke, and
 lays too great a restraint upon human nature, and
 that the Laws of it bear too hard upon the general
 Inclinations of Mankind.

I shall not at present meddle with the speculative
 Objections against Religion, upon account of the
 pretended unreasonableness of many things in point
 of Belief: because the contrariety of the true Religion
 to the Inclinations of Men, and the uneasiness of it
 in point of Practice, is that which in truth lies at
 the bottom of Atheism and Infidelity, and raises
 all that animosity which is in the Minds of bad Men
 against Religion, and exasperates them to oppose it
 with all their Wit and Malice: *Men love darkness*
rather than light, because their deeds are evil. And if
 this Prejudice were but once removed, and Men

SERM. were in some measure reconciled to the Practice of
 XXVIII. Religion, the speculative Objections against it would
 almost vanish of themselves: for there wants little
 else to enable a Man to answer them, but a willing-
 ness of Mind to have them answer'd, and that we
 have no interest and inclination to the contrary.
 And therefore I shall at present wholly apply my self
 to remove this prejudice against Religion, from the
contrariety of it to the inclinations of Men, and the
uneasiness of it in point of Practice.

And there are two parts of this Objection.

1st, That a great part of the Laws of Religion
 do thwart the natural inclinations of Men, which
 may reasonably be supposed to be from God. And,

2^{dly}, That all of them together are a heavy
 Yoke, and do lay too great a restraint upon human
 Nature, intrenching too much upon the Pleasures
 and Liberty of it.

I. *That a great part of the Laws of Religion do*
thwart the natural Inclinations of Men, which may
reasonably be supposed to be from God. So that God
 seems to have set our Nature and our Duty at vari-
 ance, to have given us Appetites and Inclinations
 one way, and Laws another: Which, if it were
 true, must needs render the Practice of Religion
 very grievous and uneasy.

The force of this Objection is very smartly expres-
 sed in those celebrated Verses of a Noble Poet of our
 own, which are so frequently in the mouths of many
 who are thought to bear no good Will to Religion.

O wearisome condition of Humanity,
Born under one Law, to another bound;
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden Vanity;
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
If Nature did not take delight in Blood,
She would have made more easy ways to good.

So that this Objection would fain charge the Sins of SERM.
Men upon God; first upon Account of the evil In- XXVIII.
clinations of our Nature; and then of the contrariety
of our Duty to those Inclinations. And from the
beginning Man hath always been apt to lay the
blame of his faults where it can least lie, upon Good-
ness and Perfection itself. The very first sin that
ever Man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw up-
on God: *The Woman whom thou gavest me* (saith A-
dam) *she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* And his
Posterity are still apt to excuse themselves the same
way. But to return a particular Answer to this Ob-
jection.

I. We will acknowledge so much of it as is true;
That there is a great degeneracy and corruption of
Human Nature, from what it was originally framed
when it came out of God's hands; of which the
Scripture gives us this account, that it was occa-
sioned by the voluntary transgression of a plain and
easy Command given by God to our first Parents.
And this Weakness contracted by the fall of our first
Parents naturally descends upon us their Posterity,
and visibly discovers it self in our Inclinations to evil,
and Impotence to that which is Good.

And of this the Heathen Philosophers, from the
Light of Nature, and their own Experience and
Observation of themselves and others, were very
sensible, that Human Nature was very much de-
clined from its primitive Rectitude, and sunk into a
weak and drooping and sickly State, which they
called a *πτερόθυσις*, the Molting of the Wings of the
Soul: But yet they were so just and reasonable as not
to charge this upon God, but upon some corruption
and impurity contracted by the Soul in a former
State before its Union with the Body. For the de-
scend of the Soul into these gross earthly Bodies they
looked upon as partly the Punishment of Faults
committed in a former State, and partly as the Op-
portunity of a new Tryal, in order to its Purgation
and

SERM. and Recovery. And this was the best Account they
 XXVIII. were able to give of this matter, without the Light
 of Divine Revelation.

So that the degeneracy of Human Nature is universally acknowledged, and God acquitted from being the Cause of it: But however, the Posterity of *Adam* do all partake of the Weakness contracted by his Fall, and do still labour under the Miseries and Inconveniences of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For tho' our Faculties be much weakned and disordered, yet they are not destroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural Judgment and Conscience doth still dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impressions of the Natural Law, as to the great lines of our duty, are still legible upon our Hearts. So that the Law written in God's Word is not contrary to the Law written upon our Hearts. And therefore it is not truly said, *that we are not born under one Law and bound to another*, but the great disorder is, that our inferior Faculties, our sensitive Appetite and Passions, are broke loose and have got head of our Reason, and are upon all occasions apt to rebel against it: But our Judgment still dictates the very same things which the Law of God doth enjoin.

It is likewise very visible, that the sad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all; whether from the better or worse temper of our Bodies, or from some other more secret cause, I shall not determine, because I know not: But that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneness to Evil, and some seeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly discover in many very early and forward inclinations to some kinds of virtue and goodness which being cultivated by Education, may under the ordinary Influence of God's Grace be carried on with great ease to great perfection.

And there are others who are not so strongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good instruction

and example in their tender years, they may be sway-
 d the other way, and without great difficulty form-
 d to goodness.

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There are some indeed (which is the hardest case)
 in whom there do very early appear strong propen-
 sions and inclinations to evil, especially to some par-
 ticular kinds of Vice: But the Case of these is not
 desperate; though greater attention and care, and a
 much more prudent management is required in the
 Education of such Persons to correct their evil tem-
 pers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the
 right way: And if the seeds of Piety and Virtue be
 but carefully sown at first, very much may be done
 by this means, even in the most depraved Natures,
 towards the altering and changing of them; howe-
 ver, to the checking and controuling of their vicious
 inclinations. And if these Persons, when they come
 to riper years, would pursue these Advantages of E-
 ducation, and take some Pains with themselves, and
 earnestly seek the Assistance of God's Grace, I doubt
 not but even these Persons by degrees might at last
 get the mastery of their unhappy Tempers.

For next to the Being and Perfections of God,
 and the Immortality of our own Souls, there is no
 Principle of Religion that I do more firmly believe
 than this, that God hath the Love for Men, that if
 we do heartily beg his assistance, and be not wanting
 to our selves, he will afford it to every one of us in
 proportion to our need of it; that he is always be-
 forehand with us, and prevents every Man with the
 gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but
 many very perverse Natures have thus been reclaimed.
 For God, who is the *Lover of Souls* (as the Son of
Sirach calls him) though he may put some Men under
 some difficult circumstances of becoming better than
 others, yet he leaves no Man under a fatal necessity
 of being wicked and perishing everlastingly. He
 tenderly considers every Man's Case and Circum-
 stances,

SERM. stances, and it is we that pull destruction upon our
 XXVIII. selves, with the Works of our own hands: But as
 W sure as God is good and just, no Man in the World
 is ruined for want of having sufficient help and aid
 afforded to him by God for his recovery.

2. It is likewise to be considered that God did not design to create Man in the full possession of happiness at first, but to train him up to it by the Tryal of his Obedience: But there could be no Tryal of our Obedience without some difficulty in our Duty: Either by Reason of powerful Temptations from without, or of cross and perverse Inclinations from within.

Our first Parents, in their state of innocency, had only the Tryal of Temptation without; to which they yielded, and were overcome; having only natural power to have resisted the Temptation, without any aid of Supernatural Grace: And that weakness to Good, and proneness to Evil which they by wilful Transgression contracted, is naturally derived to us: And we necessarily partake of the bitterness and impurity of the Fountain from whence we spring. So that we now labour under a double Difficulty; being assaulted by Temptations from without, and incited by evil Inclinations from within: But then, to ballance these, we have a double Advantage; that a greater Reward is proposed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our first Parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a supernatural Power to conflict with these Difficulties. So that, according to the merciful dispensation of God, all this conflict between our Inclination and our Duty does only serve to give a fairer opportunity for the fitting Tryal of our Obedience, and for the more glorious Reward of it.

3. God hath provided an universal Remedy for this degeneracy and weakness of human Nature: So that what we lost by the first *Adam* is abundantly repaired to us by the second. This *St. Paul* tell us

at large, Rom. 5. That as by one Man sin entered SERM.
into the World, and Death by Sin; so the Grace of XXVIII.
God hath abounded to all Men by Jesus Christ; And
that to such a degree, as effectually to countervail
the ill effects of Original Sin, and really to enable
Men, if they be not wanting to themselves, to ma-
ster and subdue all the bad Inclinations of Nature,
even in those who seem to be naturally most corrupt
and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflection
upon God acknowledge, that though he did not at
first create Man sick and weak, yet he having made
himself so, his Posterity are born so. But then God
hath not left us helpless in this weak and miserable
State, into which by wilful Transgression Mankind
is fallen: But as he commands us to be sound, so he
affords us sufficient aids of Grace by Jesus Christ for
our recovery.

And though there is a Law in our Members war-
ring against the Law of our Minds, and captivating us
to the Law of Sin and Death; i. e. though our sen-
sitive Appetite and Passions are apt to rebel against
the Reason of our Minds and the Dictates of our
natural Conscience, yet every Christian may say with
St. Paul, thanks be to God, who hath given us the
Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. hath not
left us destitute of a sufficient aid and strength to
enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of Sin,
by the powerful assistance of that grace which is so
plentifully offered to us in the Gospel. And this is
the case of all those who live under the Gospel; As
for others, as their case is best known to God, so we
have no reason to doubt but that his infinite Goodness
and Mercy takes that care of them which becomes a
merciful Creator: Though both the Measures, and
the Methods of his Mercy towards them are secret
and unknown to us.

4. The hardest contest between Man's Inclination
and Duty, is in those who have willfully contracted
vicious

SERM. vicious Habits, and by that means rendered the
 XXVIII. Duty much more difficult to themselves: having
 greatly improved the evil Inclinations of nature by
 wicked practice and custom. For the *Scriptures*
 plainly supposeth, that Men may debauch even cor-
 rupt nature, and make themselves ten-fold more the
 Children of Wrath and of the Devil, than they
 were by nature.

This is a case sadly to be deplored, but yet not
 utterly to be despaired of. And therefore those
 who by a long progress in an evil course, are plung-
 ed into this sad condition, ought to consider that
 they are not to be rescued out of it by an ordinary
 Resolution, and a common Grace of God. Their
 case plainly requires an extraordinary Remedy. For
 he that is deeply engaged in Vice is like a Man lain
 fast in a Bogg, who by a faint and lazy struggling
 to get out, does but spend his strength to no purpose
 and sinks himself the deeper into it: The only way
 is, by a resolute and vigorous effort to spring out,
 possible, at once. And therefore in this case, to
 vigorous Resolution there must be joined an earnest
 Application to God for his powerful Grace and As-
 sistance, to help us out of this miserable state. And
 if we be truly sensible of the desperate danger of our
 condition, this pressing necessity of our case will be
 apt to inspire us with a mighty Resolution. For
power and necessity are neighbours, and never dwell
 far asunder. When Men are severely urged and
 pressed, they find a power in themselves which they
 thought they had not. Like a Coward driven up
 to a Wall, who in the extremity of distress and de-
 spair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or
 like a Man lame of the Gout, who being assaulted
 by a present and terrible danger forgets his Disease
 and will find his Legs rather than lose his Life.

And in this, I do not speak above the rate of hu-
 man Nature, and what Men thoroughly roused and
 awakned to a sense of their danger, by a mighty
 Resolution

Resolution may morally do, through that Divine Grace and Assistance which is ever ready to be afforded to well resolved Minds, and such as are sincerely bent to return to God and their Duty. More than this I cannot say for the Encouragement of those who have proceeded far in an evil course: And they who have made their Case so very desperate, ought to be very thankful to God that there is any Remedy left for them. SERM. XXVIII.

5. From all that hath been said, it evidently appears, how malicious a suggestion it is, that God seeks the destruction of Men, and hath made his Laws on purpose so difficult and cross to our Inclinations, that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our disobedience to them. Alas, we are so absolutely under the Power of God, and so unable to withstand it, that he may destroy us when he pleaseth, without seeking pretences for it: *For who hath resisted his Will?* If Goodness were not his Nature, he hath Power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our destruction is plainly of ourselves, and God is free from the Blood of all Men. And he hath not made the way to eternal Life so difficult to any of us, with a design to make us miserable, but that we by a vigorous Resolution, and unwearied Diligence, and a patient continuance in Well-doing, might win and wear a more glorious Crown, and be fit to receive a more ample Reward from his Bounty and Goodness: yea, in some sense, I may say, from his Justice; *For God is not unrighteous, to forget our Work and Labour of Love.* He will fully consider all the Pains that any of us take in his Service, and all the Difficulties that we struggle with out of Love to God and Goodness. So that this Objection, from the clashing of our Duty with our Inclination, is I hope fully answered: Since God hath provided so powerful and effectual a Remedy against our natural Impotency and Infirmary, by the Grace of the Gospel.

And

SERM. XXVIII. And though to those who have wilfully contract-

ed vicious Habits, a religious and virtuous Course of Life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lies in our first entrance upon it; and when that is over, the ways of Goodness are as easy as it is fit any thing should be that is so excellent, and that hath the encouragement of so glorious a Reward. Custom will reconcile Men almost to any thing; but there are those Charms in the ways of Wisdom and Virtue, that a little Acquaintance and Conversation with them will soon make them more delightful than any other course. And who will grudge any Pains and Trouble to bring himself into so safe and happy a condition? after we have tryed both Courses of Religion and Profaneness, of Virtue and Vice, we shall certainly find, that nothing is so wise, so easy, and so comfortable as to be virtuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I desire more of any Man in this matter, than to follow the soberest Convictions of his own Mind, and to do that which upon the most serious consideration at all times, in Prosperity and Affliction, in Sickness and Health, in the time of Life, and at the Hour of Death, he judgeth wisest and safest for him to do. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the Objection, *That the Laws of Religion (and particularly, of the Christian Religion) are a heavy yoke, laying too great a Restraint upon human Nature, and entrenching too much upon the Pleasures and Liberty of it.*

There was, I confess, some pretence for this Objection against the *Jewish* Religion: which by the multitude of its positive Institutions and external Observances must needs have been very burthensome. And the same Objection lies against the Church of *Rome*, who (as they have handled Christianity) by the unreasonable number of their needless and senseless Ceremonies, have made the Yoke of *Christ* heav-

vier

vier than that of *Moses*, and the *Gospel* a more carnal SERM.
Commandment than the *Law*. So that *Christiani-* XXVIII,
ty is lost among them in the Trappings and Accou-
trements of it ; with which instead of adorning Re-
ligion they have strangely disguised it, and quite
stifled it in the crowd of external Rites and Ceremo-
nies.

But the pure Christian Religion, as it was deliver-
ed by our Saviour, hath hardly any thing in it that
is positive ; except the two Sacraments, which are
not very troublesome neither, but very much for
our comfort and Advantage, because they convey
and confirm to us the great Blessings and Privileges
of our Religion. In other things, Christianity hath
hardly imposed any other Laws upon us but what are
enacted in our Natures, or are agreeable to the
prime and fundamental Laws of it : nothing but
what every Man's Reason either dictates to him to
be necessary, or approves as highly fit and reason-
able.

But we do most grossly mistake the nature of Plea-
sure and Liberty, if we promise them to ourselves
in any evil wicked course. For, upon due search
and tryal, it will be found, that true pleasure, and
perfect freedom, are no where to be found but in the
practice of Virtue, and in the Service of God. The
Laws of Religion do not abridge us of any pleasure
that a wise Man can desire, and safely enjoy, I mean
without a greater evil and trouble consequent upon
it. The pleasure of commanding our Appetite,
and governing our Passions, by the Rules of Reason
(which are the Laws of God) is infinitely to be pre-
ferred before any sensual Pleasure whatsoever : Be-
cause it is the pleasure of Wisdom and Discretion ;
and gives us the satisfaction of having done that
which is the best and fittest for reasonable Creatures
to do. Who would not rather chuse to govern him-
self as *Scipio* did, amidst all the temptations and op-
portunities of sensual pleasure which his Power and

SERM. Victories presented to him, than to wallow in all the
XXVIII. delights of Sense?

Nothing is more certain in Reason and Experience, than that every inordinate Appetite and Affection is a punishment to it self; and is perpetually crossing its own pleasure, and defeating its own satisfaction, by overshooting the Mark it aims at. For instance, *Intemperance* in eating and drinking, instead of delighting and satisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it; and instead of quenching a natural thirst, which it is extremely pleasant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troublesome and endless. The pleasure of *Revenge*, as soon as it is executed turns into Grief and Pity, Guilt and Remorse, and a thousand melancholy wishes that we had restrained our selves from so unreasonable an Act. And the same is as evident in other sensual Excesses, not so fit to be described. We may trust *Epicurus* for this, that there can be no more pleasure without temperance in the use of pleasure. And God and Reason have set us no other bounds concerning the use of sensual Pleasures, but that we take care not to be injurious to our selves, or others, in the kind, or degree of them. And it is very visible, that all sensual Excess is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: As it goes beyond the limits of nature, it begets bodily Pains and Diseases: As it transgresseth the Rules of Reason and Religion, it breeds Guilt and Remorse in the Mind. And these are, beyond comparison, the two greatest Evils in this World; a diseased Body, and a discontented Mind: And in this I am sure I speak to the inward Feeling and Experience of Men; and say nothing but what every vicious Man finds, and hath a more lively sense of, than is to be expressed by Words.

When all is done, there is no Pleasure comparable to that of Innocency and Freedom from the stings of a guilty Conscience; this is a pure and spiritual Pleasure, much above any sensual delight. And yet among

mong all the delights of Sense, that of health (which SERM. XXVIII. is the natural consequent of a sober, and chaste, and regular Life) is a sensual Pleasure far beyond that of any Vice: For it is the Life of Life; and that which gives a grateful relish to all our other Enjoyments. It is not indeed so violent and transporting a Pleasure, but it is pure, and even, and lasting, and hath no guilt and regret, no sorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a Worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful Pleasures, and makes them to be bitterness in the end.

All the ways of Sin are so beset with thorns and difficulties on every side, there are so many unanswerable objections against Vice, from the unreasonableness and ugliness of it, from the remorse that attends it, from the endless misery that follows it, that none but the rash and inconsiderate can obtain leave of themselves to commit. It is the Daughter of Inadvertency, and Blindness and Folly; and the Mother of Guilt and Repentance, and Woe. There is no Pleasure that will hold out and abide with us to the last, but that of Innocency and Well-doing. All Sin is folly; And as *Seneca* truly says, *omnis Vultitia laborat fastidio sui; All folly soon grows sick and weary of it self.* The pleasure of it is slight and superficial, but the trouble and remorse of it pierceth our very hearts.

And then as to the other part of the Objection, *That Religion restrains us of our Liberty:* The contrary is evidently true, that Sin and Vice are the greatest slavery. For he is truly a slave, who is not at liberty to follow his own Judgment, and to do those things which he is inwardly convinced it is best for him to do; but is subject to the unreasonable Commands, and the tyrannical Power and Violence of his Lusts and Passions: So that he is not Master of himself, but other Lords have got dominion over him; and he is perfectly at their Beck and Command. One Vice or Passion bids him go, and he

SERM. goes; another, come, and he comes; and a third,
 XXVIII. do this, and he doth it. The Man is at perpetual
 ~~~~~ variance with his own Mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himself. And it is all one, whether a Man be subject to the Will and Humour of another Person, or to his own Lufts and Passions. Only this of the two is the worse; because the Tyrant is at home, and always ready at-hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and so much the harder to be vanquish'd and overcome.

But the Service of God, and Obedience to his Laws is perfect Liberty: Because the Law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own Reason, and from the Benefit and Advantage of doing it: Nothing but what is much more for our own interest to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And tho' in some things God exacts obedience of us more indispensably, and under severer Penalties, it is because those things are in their Nature more necessary to our felicity. And how could God possibly have dealt more graciously and kindly with us, than to oblige us more strictly to that which is most evidently for our good; and to make such Laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? So that taking all things into consideration, the interest of our Bodies and our Souls, of the present and the future of this world and the other, Religion is the most reasonable and wise, the most comfortable and commendable course that any Man can take in order to his own happiness.

The consideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a most prevailing Argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the Laws of God; which are in truth many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the Privileges of our Nature, and the proper Means and Causes of our happiness: And do restrain us from

thing but from doing mischief to our selves, from playing the fools and making our selves miserable. SERM. XXVIII.

And therefore instead of opposing Religion, upon pretence of the unreasonable restraints of it, we ought to thank God heartily, that he hath laid so strict an obligation upon us to regard and pursue our true interest; and hath been pleased to take that care of us, as to set bounds to our loose and wild Appetites by our Duty; and in giving us Rules to live by, hath no ways complied with our inconsiderate and foolish Inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: But hath made those things necessary for us to do, which in all respects are best for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought in all reason to be our free and first choice: And hath made the folly and inconvenience of sin so grossly palpable, that every Man may see it before-hand that will but consider, and at the beginning of a bad course look to the end of it; and they that will not consider, shall be forced from woful experience at last to acknowledge it, when they find the dismal effects and mischievous consequences of their Vices still meeting them at one turn or other.

And now, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, I hope we are satisfied that Religion is no such intolerable yoke; and that upon a due and full consideration of things it cannot *seem evil* unto any of us to *serve the Lord*: nay, on the contrary, that it is absolutely necessary, both to our present Peace and our future Felicity: And that a Religious and virtuous Life is not only upon all accounts the most prudent, but after we are entered upon it, and accustomed to it, the most pleasant Course that any Man can take; and however inconsiderate Men may complain of the Restraints of Religion, that it is not one jot more our Duty than it is our Privilege and our Happiness.



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And I cannot think, that upon sober Consideration any Man could see reason to thank God to be released from any of his Laws, or to have had the contrary, to them enjoyned. Let us suppose, that the Laws of God had been just the *reverse* of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under severe Penalties, to deal falsely and fraudulently with our Neighbours; to demean our selves ungratefully to our best Friends and Benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to pursue sensual Pleasures to the endangering of our Health and Life: How should we have complained of the unreasonableness of these Laws, and have murmured at the slavery of such intolerable Impositions? And yet now that God hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our Reason and Interest, we are not pleased neither. What will content us? As our Saviour expostulates in a like case, *Whereunto shall I liken this Generation? It is like unto Children playing in the Market-place, and calling unto their Companions, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.* This is perfectly childish, to be pleased with nothing; neither to like this, nor the contrary. We are not contented with the Laws of God as they are, and yet the contrary to them we should have esteemed the greatest grievance in the World.

And if this be true, that the Laws of God how contrary soever to our vicious Inclinations, are really calculated for our Benefit and Advantage, it would almost be an Affront to wise and considerate Men to importune them to their Interest; and with great Earnestness to persuade them to that which in all respects is so visibly for their advantage. *Chuse you therefore this day whom you will serve; God, or your Lusts.* And take up a speedy Resolution in a matter of so great and pressing a Concernment; *chuse you this day.*

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a Thing, it is good to deliberate long before we undertake

dertake it : but where the Thing is not only safe but SERM. beneficial, and not only hugely beneficial but highly XXVIII. necessary ; when our Life and our Happiness depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it ; there we cannot be too sudden in our Resolution, nor too speedy in execution of it. That which is evidently safe, needs no deliberation ; and that which is absolutely necessary will admit of none.

Therefore resolve upon it out of hand ; *To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* In the days of your Youth and Health ; for *that is the acceptable time, that is the day of salvation ; Before the evil day comes,* and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehension and approach of Death, when Men fly to God only for fear of his Wrath. For the greatest Atheists and Infidels, (when they come to dye, if they have any of that Reason left, which they have used so ill) have commonly right Opinions about God and Religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of Atheism leaves them, as the Devil uses to do Witches when they are in distress. Then with *Nebuchadnezzar*, when they are recovered from being Beasts, they look up to Heaven, and their understanding returns to them : Then they believe a God, and cannot help it ; they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus *Lucretius*, one of their great *Authors* observes, that when Men are in distress,

*Acrius advertunt animos ad Religionem.*

The thoughts of Religion are then more quick and pungent upon their Minds.

*Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo,  
Eliciuntur, & eripitur persona, manet res.*

SERM. Mens words then come from the bottom of their  
 XXVIII. Hearts; the Mask is taken off, and things then  
 appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this Choice: Nay, then it can hardly be Choice, but Necessity. Men do not then chuse to serve the Lord, but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have served their Lusts all their Life long, and now they would fain serve themselves of God at the hour of Death. They have done what they can, by their insolent contempt and defiance of the Almighty, to make themselves miserable; and now that they can stand out no longer against him, they are contented at last to be beholding to him to make them happy. The Mercies of God are vast and boundless, but yet methinks it is too great a Presumption in all reason, for Men to design beforehand to make the Mercy of God the Sanctuary and Retreat of a sinful Life.

To draw then to a Conclusion of this Discourse. If Safety, or Pleasure, or Liberty, or Wisdom, or Virtue, or even Happiness itself have any temptation in them, Religion hath all these Baits and Allurements. What *Tully* says of *Philosophy*, is much more true of the *Christian Religion*, the Wisdom and Philosophy which is from above; *Nunquam satis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat, omne tempus ætatis sine molestia degere possit. We can never praise it enough, since whoever lives according to the Rules of it, may pass the whole Age of his Life* (I may add, his whole duration, this Life and the other) *without trouble.*

*Philosophy* hath given us several plausible Rules for the attaining of peace and tranquility of Mind, but they fall very much short of bringing Men to it. The very best of them fail us upon the greatest Occasions. But the *Christian Religion* hath effectually done all that which *Philosophy* pretended to, and aimed



ed at. The Precepts and Promises of the Holy SERM. XXVIII.  
 Scriptures are every way sufficient for our Comfort, and for our Instruction in Righteousness: To correct all the Errors, and to bear us up under all the Evils and Adversities of Human Life; especially that holy and heavenly Doctrine which is contained in the admirable Sermons of our Saviour, *Quem cum legimus, quem Philosophum non contemnimus?* whose excellent Discourses when we read, what Philosopher do we not despise? None of the *Philosophers* could, upon sure grounds, give that encouragement to their *Scholars* which our *Saviour* does to his *Disciples*; *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burthen is light.*

This is the advantage of the *Christian Religion* sincerely believed and practised, that it gives perfect rest and tranquility to the mind of Man: It frees us from the guilt of an evil Conscience, and from the power of our Lusts, and from the slavish fear of Death, and of the vengeance of another World. It builds our comfort upon a Rock, which will abide all Storms, and remain unshaken in every Condition, and will last and hold out for ever: *He that beareth these sayings of mine, and doth them* (saith our Lord) *I will liken him to a wise Man, who built his House upon a Rock.*

In short, Religion makes the Life of Man a wise Design, regular and constant to itself; because it unites all our Resolutions and Actions in one great End: Whereas without Religion the Life of Man is a wild, and fluttering and inconsistent Thing, without any certain Scope and Design. The vicious Man lives at random, and acts by chance: For he that walks by no Rule, can carry on no settled and steady Design. It would pity a Man's Heart to see how hard such Men are put to it for Diversion, and what a burden Time is to them; and how solicitous they are to devise ways, not to spend it, but to squander

SERM. squander it away. For their great grievance is  
 XXVIII. Consideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon  
 any thing that is serious. They hurry from one Vanity and Folly to another ; and plunge themselves into drink, not to quench their Thirst, but their Guilt ; and are beholden to every vain Man, and to every trifling Occasion, that can but help to take Time off their Hands. Wretched and inconsiderate Men ! who have so vast a Work before them, the happiness of all Eternity to take care of, and provide for, and yet are at a loss how to employ their time ! So that Irreligion and Vice makes Life an extravagant and unnatural Thing, because it perverts and overthrows the natural course and order of Things. For instance ; according to Nature Men labour to get an Estate, to free themselves from Temptations to Rapine and Injury ; and that they may have wherewithal to supply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous Man heaps up Riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them ; and starves himself in the midst of Plenty, and most unnaturally cheats and robs himself of that which is his own ; and makes a hard shift to be as poor and miserable with a great Estate, as any Man can be without it. According to the Design of Nature, Men should eat and drink that they may live ; but the voluptuous Man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all sensual Enjoyments designs Pleasure, which may certainly be had within the limits of Virtue : But Vice rashly pursues Pleasure into the Enemy's Quarters ; and never stops till the Sinner be surrounded and seized upon by Pain and Torment.

So that take away God and Religion, and Men live to no Purpose ; without proposing any worthy and considerable end of Life to themselves. Whereas the fear of God, and the care of our immortal Souls, fixeth us upon one great Design, to which our whole Life, and all the Actions of it are ultimately

mately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (saith *Lactantius*) *ibi vita, & omnis ætus, ad unum caput, & ad unum summum refertur*; When we acknowledge God as the Author of our Being, as our Sovereign, and our Judge, our End and our Happiness is then fixed; and we can have but one reasonable Design, and that is, by endeavouring to please God, to gain his Favour and Protection in this World, and to arrive at the blissful Enjoyment of him in the other; *In whose presence is fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand are pleasures for evermore.* To Him, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## SERMON XXIX.

Of the Difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits.

JEREMIAH xiii. 23.

*Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.*

CONsidering the great Difficulty of reclaiming SERM.  
those who are far gone in an evil course, it XXIX.  
is no more than needs to use all sorts of Arguments to this purpose: From the Consideration of the evil of Sin, and of the Goodness of God, and his wonderful Patience and Long-suffering towards us in the midst of our infinite Provocations: From his great Mercy and Pity declared to us in all those gracious Means and Methods which he



SERM. he useth for our Recovery : And from his Readiness  
 XXIX. and Forwardness after all our Rebellions to receive  
 us upon our Repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us, as if we had never offended him : And from the final Issue and Event of a wicked Life, the dismal and endless Miseries of another World, into which we shall inevitably fall, except we repent in time, and return to a better mind : And lastly, from the Danger of being hardened in an evil Course, past all remedy and hopes of Repentance.

And yet I am very sensible that to discourse to Men of the Impossibility, or at least the extream Difficulty of rescuing themselves out of this miserable State, seems to be an odd and cross kind of Argument, and more apt to drive People to Despair, than to gain them to Repentance.

But since the Spirit of God is pleased make use of it to this purpose, we may safely rely upon infinite Wisdom for the fitness of it to awaken Sinners to a sense of their Condition, in order to their Recovery. For here in the Text, after terrible Threatnings of Captivity and Desolation to the People of the *Jews*, who were extreamly wicked and degenerate, through an universal depravation of Manners in all Ranks of Men from the highest to the lowest, so that they seemed to stand upon the brink of Ruin, and to be fatally devoted to it ; to add to the terror and force of these Threatnings, God, by his Prophet represents to them the infinite danger and extream difficulty of their Case, to see if he could startle them by telling them into what a desperate Condition they had plunged themselves ; being by a long Custom of sinning so far engaged in an evil Course, that they had almost cut off themselves from a possibility of retreat ; so that the difficulty of their change seem'd next to a natural impossibility. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots ? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.*

The

The expression is very high, and it is to be hoped somewhat Hyperbolical and above the just meaning of the Words. Which are, I think only designed to signify to us the extream difficulty of making this Change ; which is therefore resembled to a natural Impossibility, as coming very near it, tho' not altogether up to it. SERM. XXIX.

And that this Expression is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by considering some other like Passages of Scripture. As where our Saviour compares the difficulty of a rich Man's Salvation to that which is naturally impossible, *viz. to a Camel's passing through the Eye of a Needle*: Nay, he pitcheth his Expression higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal, but of greater Difficulty ; *I say unto you it is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*. And yet when he comes to explain this to his Disciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, *how hard is it for those that have Riches to be saved ?* and that it was not absolutely impossible, but speaking according to human Probability : *with Men this is impossible, but not with God*.

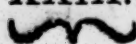
And thus also it is reasonable to understand that severe Passage of the Apostle, *Heb. 6. 4. It is impossible for them that were once enlightned, if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. It is impossible, that is, it is very difficult*.

In like manner we are to understand this high Expression in the Text, *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots ? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil*: that is, this moral change of Men settled and fixed in bad habits, is almost as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained *two* things will properly fall under our consideration.

*First*, The great difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits, or of changing a bad Course, to those who have

SERM. have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it.  
XXIX.

 Secondly, Notwithstanding the great difficulty of the Thing, what ground of Hope and Encouragement there is left that it may be done. So that notwithstanding the appearing harshness of the Text, the result of my Discourse will be, not to discourage any, how bad soever, from attempting this Change, but to put them upon it, and to persuade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may seem to be one of the strongest Objections against all Endeavours of Men very bad, to become better.

I. *First*, The great difficulty of reforming Vicious Habits, or of changing a bad Course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it. And this difficulty ariseth, partly from the general nature of Habits indifferently considered whether they be good, or bad, or indifferent; partly from the particular Nature of evil and vicious Habits; and partly, from the natural and judicial Consequences of a great Progress and long Continuance in an Evil Course. By the Consideration of these three Particulars, the extreme difficulty of this Change, together with the true Causes and Reasons of it will fully appear.

1. If we consider the nature of all Habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The Custom and frequent Practice of any thing begets in us a faculty and easiness in doing it. It bends the Powers of our Soul, and turns the Stream and Current of our Animal Spirits such a way, and gives all our Faculties a tendency and pliability to such a sort of Actions. And when we have long stood bent one way, we grow settled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be restored to our former State and Condition. For the perfection of any Habit, whether good or bad, induceth a kind of necessity of acting accordingly. A rooted Habit becomes a governing Principle, and bears almost



most an equal sway in us with that which is Natural. SERM.  
It is a kind of a new Nature superinduced, and even XXIX.  
as hard to be expelled, as some things which are  
primitively and originally natural. When we bend  
a thing at first it will endeavour to restore itself;  
but it may be held bent so long till it will continue  
so of itself, and grow crooked; and then it may re-  
quire more force and violence to reduce it to its former  
straightness, than we used to make it crooked at first.  
This is the nature of all Habits, the farther we pro-  
ceed, the more we are confirmed in them: And that  
which at first we did voluntary, by degrees becomes  
so natural and necessary, that it is almost impossible  
for us to do otherwise. This is plainly seen in the  
experience of every Day in things good and bad,  
both in lesser and greater Matters.

2. This difficulty ariseth more especially from the  
particular Nature of evil and vicious Habits. These,  
because they are suitable to our corrupt Nature, and  
conspire with the Inclinations of it, are likely to be  
of a much quicker groweth and improvement, and  
in a shorter space, and with less care and endeavour,  
to arrive at Maturity and Strength, than the Habits  
of Grace and Goodness. Considering the Propensi-  
on of our depraved Nature, the Progress of Virtue  
and Goodness is up the Hill, in which we not only  
move hardly and heavily, but are easily roll'd back:  
but by Wickedness and Vice we move downwards;  
which, as it is much quicker and easier, so it is  
harder for us to stop in that course, and infinite-  
ly more difficult to return from it.

Not but that at first a Sinner hath some consider-  
able Checks and Restraints upon him, and meets  
with several Rubs and Difficulties in his way; the  
Shame and Unreasonableness of his Vices, and the  
trouble and disquiet which they create to him:  
But he breaks loose from these Restraints, and gets  
over these Difficulties by degrees: and the faster and  
farther he advanceth in an evil Course, the less trou-  
ble

SERM. ble still they give him, till at last they almost quite  
 XXIX. lose their Force, and give him little or no Distur-  
 ~~~~~ bance.

Shame is a great Restraint upon Sinners at first but that soon falls off: and when Men have once lost their Innocence, their Modesty is not like to be long troublesome to them. For Impudence comes on with Vice, and grows up with it. Lesser Vices do not banish all Shame and Modesty, but great and abominable Crimes harden Mens foreheads and make them shameless. *Were they ashamed* (saith the Prophet) *when they committed Abomination? nay they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.* When Men have the Heart to do a very bad Thing, they seldom want the Face to bear it out.

And as for the *Unreasonableness* of Vice, though nothing in the World be more evident to a free and impartial Judgment, and the Sinner himself discerns it clearly enough at his first setting out in a wicked Course:

—*Video meliora, proboque,
 Deteriora sequor.*

He offends against the Light of his own Mind and does wickedly when he knows better: yet after he hath continued for some time in this Course, and is heartily engaged in it, his foolish Heart is darkened and the Notions of Good and Evil are obscured and confounded, and things appear to him in a false and imperfect Light: His Lusts do at once blind and byass his Understanding; and his Judgment by degrees goes over to his Inclinations; and he cannot think that there should be so much reason against those things for which he hath so strong an Affection. He is now engaged in a Party, and factiously concerned to maintain it, and to make the best of it and to that end, he bends all his Wits to advance such principles as are fittest to justify his wicked Practices.

Practices; and in all Debates plainly favours that side SERM.
of the Question, which will give the greatest Coun- XXIX.
tenance and Encouragement to them. When Men
are corrupt and do abominable Works, they say in
their Hearts there is no God; that is, they would fain
think so. And every thing serves for an Argument
to a willing Mind; and every little Objection ap-
pears strong and considerable, which makes against
that which Men are loth should be true.

Not that any Man ever satisfied himself in the Prin-
ciples of Infidelity, or was able to arrive to a steady
and unshaken persuasion of the truth of them, so as not
vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. How-
ever, by this means many Men, though they can-
not fully comfort, yet they make a shift to cheat
themselves; to still their Consciences, and lay them
asleep for a time, so as not to receive any great and
frequent disturbance in their Course, from the checks
and rebukes of their own Minds. And when these
Restraints are removed, the work of Iniquity goes
on amain, being favoured both by Wind and Tide.

3. The difficulty of this change ariseth likewise
from the natural and judicial Consequences of a
great progress and long continuance in an evil Course.
My meaning is, that inveterate evil Habits do,
partly from their own Nature, and partly from the
just Judgment and Permission of God, put Men
under several Disadvantages of moving effectually
towards their own Recovery.

By a long custom of sinning, Men's Consciences
grow brawny, and *seared as it were with a hot Iron*;
and by being often trampled upon, they become
hard as the beaten Road. So that unless it be upon
some extraordinary Occasion, they are seldom a-
wakened to a sense of their Guilt. And when Mens
Hearts are thus hard, the best Counsels make but lit-
tle impression upon them. For they are steel'd a-
gainst Reproof, and impenetrable to good Advice;
which is therefore seldom offer'd to them, even by

SERM. those that wish them well, because they know it to
 XXIX. be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It
 requires a great deal of good Nature in a very bad
 Man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his
 Faults.

Besides, that habitual Wickedness is naturally apt to banish Consideration, to weaken our Resolution, and to discourage our Hopes both of God's Grace and Assistance, and of his Mercy and Forgiveness, which are the best means and encouragement to Repentance.

Sin is a great Enemy to *Consideration*; and especially when Men are deeply plunged into it, their Condition is so very bad, that they are loth to think of it, and to search into it. A vicious Man is a very deformed sight, and to none more than to himself; and therefore he loves to turn his Eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himself. He is afraid to be alone, lest his own Mind should arrest him, and his Conscience should take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own Thoughts meet with him, and he cannot avoid Consideration, he is ready to say as *Ahab* did to *Elijah*, *Hast thou found me, O my Enemy!* and is as glad to shake it off, as a Man is to get rid of a Creditor, whom because he knows not how to satisfy, he cares not to speak with him. Consideration is the great troubler and disturber of Men in an evil Course, because it would represent to them the plain truth of their Case; and therefore they do all they can to keep it off, as those who have improvidently managed their Affairs, and being ill Husbands of their Estates, are loth to make up their Accounts, lest by that means they should be forced to understand the worst of their Condition.

Or if Consideration happen to take them at an Advantage, and they are so hard prest by it, that they cannot escape the sight of their own Condition, yet they find themselves so miserably entangled and hamper'd

hamper'd in an evil Course, and bound so fast in the SERM. Chains of their own Wickedness, that they know XXIX. not how to get loose. Sin is the saddest slavery in the World; it breaks and sinks Mens Spirits, and makes them so base and servile, that they have not the courage to rescue themselves. No sort of Slaves are so poor spirited, as they that are in Bondage to their Lusts. Their Power is gone, or if they have any left, they have not the heart to make use of it. And though they see and feel their Misery, yet they chuse rather to sit down in it, and tamely to submit to it, than to make any resolute Attempt for their Liberty. What the Prophet says of *Whoredom* and *Wine*, is proportionably true of other Vices, *they take away the Heart*. Every Lust that we entertain deals with us as *Delilah* did with *Sampson*, not only robs us of our Strength, but leaves us fast bound: So that if at any time we be awakened to a sense of our Condition, and try to rescue ourselves from it, we find that *our strength is departed from us*, and that we are not able to break loose.

And as long custom and continuance in Sin deprives us of our Strength, so it discourageth our Hopes, both of God's Grace and Assistance, and of his Mercy and Forgiveness. For why should Men expect the continuance of that Grace which they have so often received in vain? After so many Provocations how can we look the offended Majesty of God in the Face? how can we lift up our Eyes to Heaven with any hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness there? Despair doth almost naturally spring from an evil Conscience; and when Men are thoroughly awakened to a sense of Sin, and of the infinite Evil of it, as they cannot easily forgive themselves, so they can hardly believe that there is goodness enough any where to forgive them.

But besides these Disadvantages, which are natural and consequent upon a vicious Course; by the just Judgment of God, his Spirit is withdrawn from them,

SERM. those that wish them well, because they know it to
 XXIX. be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It
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But besides these Disadvantages, which are natural and consequent upon a vicious Course; by the just Judgment of God, his Spirit is withdrawn from them,

SERM. them, and they are given up to their own Hearts
 XXIX. Lusts, to commit all Iniquity with greediness. And
 then there is hardly any thing left, either to restrain
 them in their evil Course, or to recover them out
 of it.

And not only so, but by the just permission of
 God, as Men grow worse and more wicked, the
 Devil hath a nearer Access to them, and more im-
 mediate Power over them. So the *Scripture* tells
 us, that wicked Men are *led captive by Satan at his
 pleasure*, and that the *evil one works and acts in the
 Children of Disobedience*: They are as it were posselt
 and inspired by him. And what can be expected
 from this cruel and malicious Enemy of Mankind,
 but that he will continually be pushing them on
 from one Wickedness to another, till he drive them
 first into Despair, and then, if God permit him,
 into eternal Perdition?

And what a forlorn State is this? When Men are
 thus forsaken of God, and left without check, blind-
 ly and headily to follow the sway of their own Tem-
 pers, and the bent of their own corrupt Hearts?
 when they are continually expos'd to Temptations,
 strongly inviting them to Evil; and God lets the
 Devil loose upon them to manage those Temptati-
 ons with the utmost Skill, and to practice all his
 Arts and Wiles upon them? In these Circumstances
 Men almost infallibly run into Sin, as sure as Men
 wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in
 slippery places, and of being entangled when they
 continually walk in the midst of Snares cunningly
 laid for them. It is not in Men, thus disabled and
 entangled, to order their own Steps, and to restrain
 their Inclinations and Passions in the presence of a
 powerful Temptation. At the best, we need God's
 direction to guide us, his continual Grace to uphold
 us, and to guard and preserve us from Evil; and
 much more do we stand in need of it when we have
 brought ourselves into these wretched Circumstances;

but

but then alas! how little reason have we to hope for it? SERM.
XXIX.

Blind and miserable Men! That in despite of all the merciful Warnings of God's Word and Providence, will run themselves into this desperate State, and never think of returning to a better Mind, till their retreat is difficult almost to an Impossibility. I proceed to the

II. Head of my Discourse, which was to shew that the Case of these Persons, though it be extremely difficult, is not quite desperate; but after all, there is some ground of Hope and Encouragement left, that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to Goodness. Indeed humanly speaking, and according to all Appearance and Probability, the thing seems to be very hopeless, and next to an Impossibility; but yet what our *Saviour* says concerning the difficulty of a rich Man's Salvation, will reach also to this Case, tho' much more difficult; *those things which are impossible with Men, are possible with God.*

And this will appear, if we consider that even in the worst of Men there is something left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to Consideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous Resolution of a better Course: And this accompanied with a powerful Assistance of God's Grace, which when sincerely sought is never to be despaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greatest of Sinners.

I. There is left, even in the worst of Men, a natural Sense of the Evil and Unreasonableness of Sin; which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in human Nature. For tho' the Habits of great Vices are very apt to harden and stupify Men, so that they have seldom a just sense of their evil Ways, yet these Persons are sometimes under strong Convictions, and their Consciences do severely check and rebuke them for their Faults. They are also, by

SERM. fits, under great apprehension of the danger of their
 XXIX. Condition, and that the Course which they are in,
 if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruin them at last; especially, when their Consciences are thoroughly awakened, by some great Affliction, or the near approach of Death, and a lively Sense of another World. And the Apprehension of a mighty Danger will make Men to look about them, and to use the best means to avoid it.

2. Very bad Men, when they have any thoughts of becoming better, are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's Grace and Mercy. For though they find all the Causes and Reasons of Despair in themselves, yet the Consideration of the boundless Goodness and Compassions of God (how undeserved soever on their part) is apt to kindle some sparks of Hope, even in the most desponding Mind. His wonderful Patience, in the midst of our manifold Provocations, cannot but be a good Sign to us, that he hath no mind that we should perish, but rather that we should come to Repentance; and if we do repent, we are assured by his Promise, that we shall be forgiven. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Who knows what Men thoroughly rouzed and startled may resolve, and do? And a mighty Resolution will break through Difficulties which seem insuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful Creatures; yet Nature when it is mightily irritated and stirred will do strange things. The Resolutions of Men upon the brink of Despair have been of an incredible Force: And the Soul of Man in nothing more discovers its Divine Power and Original, than in that Spring which is in it, whereby it recovers itself when it is mightily urged and prest. There is

a sort of Resolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can resist it or stand before it. SERM.
XXIX.

Of this there have been great Instances in several kinds. Some by an obstinate Resolution, and taking incredible Pains with themselves, have mastered great natural Vices and Defects. As *Socrates* and *Demosthenes*, who almost exceeded all Mankind in those two things for which by Nature they seemed to be least made, and most unfit. One, in governing of his Passions, and the other in the mighty Force and Power of his Eloquence.

Some, that by Intemperance have brought themselves to a Dropsy, which hath just set them upon the brink of the Grave, by a bold and steady Purpose to abstain wholly from Drink for a long time together, have rescued themselves from the Jaws of Death.

Some that had almost ruined themselves by a careless and dissolute Life, and having run themselves out of their Estates into Debt, and being cast into Prison, have there taken up a manly Resolution to retrieve and recover themselves; and by the indefatigable Labour and Study of some years in that uncomfortable retreat, have mastered the Knowledge and Skill of one of the most difficult Professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And some in the full career of a wicked Course, have by a sudden Thought and Resolution, raised in them and assisted by a mighty Grace of God, taken up presently and made an immediate change from great Wickedness and Impiety of Life, to a very exemplary degree of Goodness and Virtue.

The two great encouragements to Virtue which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars were these; and they were worthy of so great a Philosopher: *First, Choose always the best course of Life, and Custom will soon*

SERM. *soon make it the most pleasant.* The other was this, XXIX. that *Power and Necessity are Neighbours, and never dwell far from one another.* When Men are pressed by a great Necessity, when Nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost, Men discover in themselves a Power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do.

4. The Grace and Assistance of God, when sincerely sought, is never to be despaired of. So that if we do but heartily and in good earnest resolve upon a better Course, and implore the help of God's Grace to this purpose, no degree of it that is necessary shall be wanting to us. And here is our chief ground of Hope. For we are *weak and unstable as Water*; and when we have taken up good Resolutions do easily start from them. So that fresh Supplies, and a continued Assistance of God's Grace is necessary to keep up the first warmth and vigor of our Resolutions, till they prove effectual and victorious. And this Grace God hath promised he will not deny to us when we are thus disposed for it; that he *will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; that he will not quench the smothering flax, nor break the bruised Reed, until he bring forth Judgment unto Victory.*

All that now remains is to apply this to our selves: And we are all concerned in it: For we shall all find our selves comprehended under one of these three Heads: Either we are of the Number of those few happy Persons, who by the Influence and Advantage of a good Education were never engaged in a bad Course: Or, of those who have been drawn into Vice, but are not yet far gone in it: Or, of those who have been long accustomed to an evil Course, and are grown old and stiff in it.

The first of these have great cause to thank God for this singular Felicity, that they were never ensnared

snared and intangled in Vicious Habits, that they have not had the Trial of their own Weakness under this miserable Slavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own Power, to have lost their Liberty and the Government of themselves. When we hear of the miserable servitude of the poor Christians in *Turkey*, we are apt, as there is great Reason, to pity them, and to think what a Blessing of God it is to us that we are not in their Condition: And yet *that* Slavery is not comparable to *this*, either for the sad Nature or the dismal Consequences of it; or for the difficulty of being released from it. And let such Persons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil Course, preserve their Innocency with great tenderness and care, as the greatest Jewel in the World. No Man knows what he does, and what a Foundation of Trouble he lays to himself, when he forfeits his Innocency, and breaks the Peace of his own Mind; when he yields to a Temptation, and makes the first Step into a bad Course. He little thinks whether his Lusts may hurry him, and what a Monster they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Those who have been seduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil Course, let them make a speedy Retreat, lest they put it for ever out of their Power to return. Perhaps their Feet only are yet ensnared, but their Hands are at liberty, and they have some Power left, whereby with an ordinary Grace of God they may loose and rescue themselves. But after a while their Hands may be manacled, and all their Power may be gone; and when they are thus *bound Hand and Foot*, they are just prepared, and in danger every Moment to be cast into utter Darkness.

3. As for those, who are gone very far, and are grown old in Vice, who can forbear to lament over them? For they are a sad spectacle indeed, and the truest

SERM. trueſt object of Pity in the World. And yet, *their*
 XXIX. Recovery is not utterly to be deſpaired of; for *with*
God it is poſſible. The Spirit of God, which hath
 withdrawn himſelf, or rather hath been driven a-
 way by them, may yet be perſuaded to return, and
 to undertake them once more, if they would but
 ſeriously reſolve upon a Change, and heartily beg
 God's Aſſiſtance to that Purpoſe. If we would
 take up a mighty Reſolution, we might hope that
 God would afford a miraculous Grace to ſecond it,
 and make it effectual to our Recovery. Even in
 this perverſe and degenerate Age in which we live,
 God hath not been wanting to give ſome miracu-
 lous Inſtances of his Grace and Mercy to Sinners,
 and thoſe perhaps equal to any of thoſe we meet
 with in Scripture, of *Manaſſes*, or *Mary Magdalen*,
 or the *Penitent Thief*; both for the Greatneſs of
 the Offenders, and the Miracle of their Change.
 To the end that none might deſpair, and for want
 of the Encouragement of an Example equal to
 their own Caſe, be diſheartned from ſo noble an
 Enterpriſe. I am loth to put you in Mind how
 bad ſome have been, who yet have been *ſnatched*
as Firebrands out of the Fire; and that in ſo ſtrange
 a manner, that it would even amaze a Man to think
 of the wonder of the Recovery: Thoſe who have
 funk themſelves into the very depth of Infidelity
 and Wickedneſs, have by a mighty Hand and out-
 ſtretched Arm of God been pluckt out of this hor-
 rible Pit. And will we ſtill ſtand it out with God,
 when ſuch great Leaders have given up the Cauſe,
 and have ſurrendred and yielded up themſelves wil-
 ling Captives to the Grace of God? That Omni-
 potent Grace of God, which can eaſily ſubdue the
 ſtoutest Heart of Man, by letting in ſo ſtrong a Light
 upon our Minds, and pouring ſuch terrible Convicti-
 ons into our Conſciences, that we can find no eaſe but
 in turning to God.

I hope there are none here so bad, as to need all SERM. the encouragement to Repentance, which such Ex-XXIX Examples might give them: Encouragement I say to Repentance: For surely these Examples can encourage no Man to venture any farther in a wicked Course: They are so very rare, and like the Instances of those who have been brought back to Life after the sentence of Death seemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps some will not believe that there have been such Examples; or if they have, they impute all this either to a disturbed Imagination, or to the faint and low Spirits of Men under great bodily Weakness, or to their natural Cowardice and Fear; or to I know not what foolish and fantastical Design of compleating and finishing a wicked Life with an hypocritical Death. Nothing surely is easier than to put some bad Constructions upon the best Things, and so slur even Repentance it self, and almost dash it out of Countenance by some bold, and perhaps witty saying about it. But oh that Men were wise! oh that Men were wise! that they understood, and would consider their latter End! Come, let us neither trifle, nor dissemble in this matter; I dare say every Man's Conscience is convinced, that they who have led very ill Lives, have so much reason for Repentance, that we may easily believe it to be real. However, of all things in the World, let us not make a mock of Repentance; that which must be our last Sanctuary and Refuge, and which we must all come to before we die, or *it had been better for us we had never been born.* Therefore, *let my Counsel be acceptable unto you, break off your sins by Repentance, and your iniquities by Righteousness:* And that instantly, and without delay; *lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* If we have been enslaved but a little to a vicious Course, we shall find it a Task difficult enough to assert our own Liberty, *to break these bonds in sunder, and to cast these Cords*
from

SERM. *from us:* But if we have been long under this Bondage, we have done so much to undo our selves, and to make our Case desperate, that it is God's infinite Mercy to us that there is yet Hope. Therefore, *give Glory to the Lord your God, before he cause Darknes, and your feet stumble upon the dark Mountains, and while you look for Light, he turn it into Darknes and the shadow of Death.* I will conclude with that encouraging Invitation, even to the greatest of Sinners to Repentance, from the Mouth of God himself, *Isa. 55. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your Soul shall live: Seek the Lord while he may be found; and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous Man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

To him let us apply our selves, and humbly beseech him, *who is mighty to save*, that he would stretch forth the right Hand of his Power for our deliverance, from this miserable and cruel bondage of our Lusts: and that *as the rain cometh down from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the Earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud;* so he would grant that *his word may not return void, but accomplish his pleasure, and prosper in the thing to which he sent it;* For his Mercy sake in Jesus Christ, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.*

S E R M O N XXX.

The Necessity of the Knowledge of
the Holy Scriptures.

MATTH. xxiii. 13.

*Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites;
for ye shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against
Men; and ye neither go in your selves, neither
suffer ye them that are entring to go in.*

THE *Scribes*, so often mentioned in the *Gospel*, were the great Doctors among the *Jews*, the Teachers and Interpreters of the Law of God. And because many of them were of the Sect of the *Pharisees*, which above all others pretended to Skill and Knowledge in the Law, therefore it is that our blessed *Saviour* does so often put the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* together. And these were the Men of chief Authority in the *Jewish* Church; who equalled their own unwritten Word and Traditions with the Law of God: Nay, our *Saviour* tells us, *they made all the Commandments of God of none effect by their Traditions*. They did in effect assume to themselves *Infallibility*; and all that opposed and contradicted them, they branded with the odious Name of *Hereticks*. Against these our *Saviour* denounceth this Woe here in the Text, *Wo*

SERM.

XXX.

unto

SERM. unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye shut
 XXX. up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men, &c.

~~~~~ All the difficulty in these Words, is what is here meant by *shutting up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*: St. Luke expresseth it more plainly, *Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge, ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.* By putting these two Expressions together, we shall the more easily come at the meaning of the Text, *Ye have taken away the Key of Knowledge, and have shut up the Kingdom of Heaven against Men.* This Metaphor of the *Key of Knowledge*, is undoubtedly an Allusion to that known Custom among the Jews in the admission of their Doctors. For to whomsoever they gave Authority to interpret the Law and the Prophets, they were solemnly admitted into that Office by delivering to them a *Key* and a *Table-Book*. So that by the *Key of Knowledge*, is here meant the Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures; and by *taking away the Key of Knowledge*, not only that they arrogated to themselves alone the Understanding of the Scriptures, but likewise that they had conveyed away this Key of Knowledge, and as it were, hid it out of the way, neither using it themselves as they ought, nor suffering others to make use of it.

And thus they *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*; which is very fitly said of those who have locked the Door against them that were going in, and have taken away the Key. By all which it appears, that the plain meaning of our Saviour in these Metaphorical Expressions is, that the Scribes and Teachers of the Law, under a pretence of interpreting the Scriptures, had perverted them and kept the true Knowledge of them from the People: Especially those Prophecies of the *Old Testament* which concerned the *Messias*. And by this means the Kingdom of Heaven was shut against Men: And they not only rejected the Truth themselves, but by keeping Men



Ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures; SERM.  
they hindred many from embracing our Saviour's XXX.  
Doctrine, and entering into the Kingdom of Hea-  
ven, who were otherwise well enough disposed for

Having thus explained the Words, I shall from  
the main Scope and Design of them observe to you  
these two Things.

1. The Necessity of the Knowledge of the Holy  
Scriptures in order to our Eternal Salvation. It is  
called by our Saviour *the Key of Knowledge*, that  
which lets Men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The great and inexcusable Fault of those who  
deprive the People of the Knowledge of the Holy  
Scriptures. They *shut the Kingdom of Heaven against*  
*Men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their Eter-  
nal Salvation; and therefore our Saviour denounceth  
a heavy a Woe against them.

I shall speak briefly to these two *Observations*; and  
then apply them to those who are principally con-  
cerned in them.

I. *First*, I observe hence the Necessity of the  
Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in order to our  
Eternal Salvation. This is by our Saviour called  
*the Key of Knowledge*, that which lets Men into  
the Kingdom of Heaven.

Knowledge is necessary to Religion: It is ne-  
cessary to the Being of it; and necessary to the Life  
and Practice of it. *Without Faith* (says the *Apostle*)  
*it is impossible to please God*: Because Faith is an act  
of the Understanding, and does necessarily suppose  
some Knowledge and Apprehension of what we be-  
lieve. To all Acts of Religion there is necessarily  
required some Act of the Understanding; so that  
without Knowledge there can be no Devotion in the  
service of God, no Obedience to his Laws. Reli-  
gion begins in the Understanding, and from thence  
descends upon the Heart and Life. *If ye know these*  
*things* (says our Saviour) *happy are ye if ye do them.*

We

SERM. We must first know God, before we can worshipping  
 XXX. him; and understand what is his Will, before we  
 can do it.

This is so very evident, that one would think there needed no Discourse about it. And yet there are some in the World that cry up Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion. And to shew that we do not wrong them in this Matter, Mr. *Rushworth* in his *Dialogues* (a Book in great vogue among the Papists here in *England*) does expressly reckon up Ignorance among *the Parents of Religion*. And can any thing be said more absurdly, and more to the disparagement of Religion, than to derive the Pedigree of the most excellent thing in the World, from so obscure and ignoble an Original; and to make that which the Scripture calls *the beginning of Wisdom*, and *the excellency of Knowledge*, to be the Off-spring of Ignorance, and a Child of Darknes? Ignorance indeed may be the cause of Wonder and Admiration, and the Mother of Folly and Superstition: But surely Religion is of a nobler Extraction, and is the Issue and Result of the best Wisdom and Knowledge; and descends from above, from the Giver of every good and perfect Gift, even the Father of Lights.

And as Knowledge in general is necessary to Religion, so more particularly the Knowledge of the *Holy Scriptures* is necessary to our Eternal Salvation. Because these are the great and standing Revelation of God to Mankind; wherein the Nature of God, and his Will concerning our Duty, and the Terms and Conditions of our Eternal Happiness in another World, are fully and plainly declared to us.

The Scriptures are the Word of God; and from whence can we learn the Will of God so well as from his own Mouth? They are the great Instrument of our Salvation; and should not every Man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly instruct him what he must believe, and what he must do that

he may be saved? This is the Testimony which the SERM. Scripture gives of itself, that it is *able to make Men* XXX. *wise unto Salvation*: And is it not very fit that every Man should have this Wisdom, and in order thereunto the free use of that *Book* from whence this Wisdom is to be learned?

II. *Secondly*, I observe the great and inexcusable Fault of those who keep Men in Ignorance of Religion, and take away from them so excellent and necessary a means of Divine Knowledge as the *Holy Scriptures* are. This our *Saviour* calls *taking away the Key of Knowledge, and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against Men*. That is, doing what in them lies to render it impossible for Men to be saved. For this he denounceth a terrible *Woe* against the Teachers of the *Jewish Church*: Though they did not proceed so far as to deprive Men of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*, but only of the right Knowledge and understanding of them. This alone is a horrible Impiety, to lead Men into a false Sense and Interpretation of Scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to stop Knowledge at the very Fountain head; and not only to lead Men into Error, but to take away from them all possibility of rectifying their Mistakes. And can there be a greater Sacrilege, than to rob Men of the Word of God, the best means in the World of acquainting them with the Will of God and their Duty, and the way to Eternal Happiness? To keep the People in Ignorance of that which is necessary to save them, is *to judge them unworthy of Eternal Life*, and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciously to contrive the Ruin and the eternal Destruction of their Souls.

To lock up the *Scriptures* and the *Service of God* from the People in an unknown Tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid Men to know God and to serve him; to render them incapable of knowing what is the good and acceptable Will of God; of



SERM. joyning in his Worship, or performing any part of  
 XXX. it, or receiving any Benefit or Edification from it?

And what is, if this be not, to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against Men? This is so outrageous a cruelty to the Souls of Men, that it is not to be excused upon any pretence whatsoever: This is to take the surest and most effectual way in the World to destroy those for whom Christ died, and directly to thwart the great Design of God our Saviour, who would have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. Men may miscarry with their Knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of it.

The best things in the World have their Inconveniences attending them, and are liable to be abused; but surely Men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abusing their Knowledge, or for the prevention of any other Inconvenience whatsoever. Besides, this is to cross the very end of the Scriptures, and the design of God in inspiring Men to write them. Can any Man think that God should send this great Light of his Word into the World, for the Priests to *bide it under a Bushel*; and not rather it should be set up to the greatest Advantage for the enlightening of the World? St. Paul tells us, *Rom. 15. 4. That whatsoever things were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. And 2 Tim. 3. 16. That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* And if the Scriptures were written for these Ends, can any Man have the face to pretend that they do not concern the People as well as their Teachers? Nay St. Paul expressly tells the Church of Rome, that they were written for their Learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make use of them. Are the Scriptures so useful and profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Instruction in Righteous-

Righteousness? and why may they not be used by SERM.  
the People for those ends for which they were given? **XXX.**

'Tis true indeed they are fit for the most knowing  
and learned, and sufficient to make *the Man of God*  
*perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work* (as  
the *Apostle* there tells us.) But does this exclude their  
being profitable also to the People who may reasonably  
be presumed to stand much more in need of all  
means and helps of Instruction than their Teachers?  
And though there be many Difficulties and Obscuri-  
ties in the Scriptures, enough to exercise the Skill and  
Wit of the Learned, yet they are not therefore ei-  
ther useless or dangerous to the People. The an-  
cient *Fathers* of the Church were of another Mind.  
St. *Chrysostom* tells us, that "Whatever things are  
" necessary, are manifest in the Scriptures. And St.  
" *Austin*, That all things are plain in the Scripture,  
" which concern Faith and a good Life; and that  
" those things which are necessary to the Salvation  
" of Men, are not so hard to be come at, but that  
" as to those things which the Scripture plainly con-  
" tains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar  
" Friend to the Heart of the Learned and Unlearn-  
" ed. And upon these and such like Considerations,  
the *Fathers* did every where in their *Orations* and  
*Homilies* charge and exhort the People to be conver-  
sant in the holy Scriptures, to read them daily, and  
diligently, and attentively. And I challenge our  
*Adversaries* to shew me where any of the ancient  
*Fathers* do discourage the People from reading the  
Scriptures, much less forbid them so to do. So that  
they who do it now have no Cloak for their Sin:  
And they who pretend so confidently to *Antiquity* in  
other Cases, are by the Evidence of Truth forced to  
acknowledge that it is against them in this. Though  
they have ten thousand *Schoolmen* on their side, yet  
have they not one Father, not the least pretence of  
Scripture, or rag of Antiquity to cover their Naked-  
ness in this Point.

SERM. With great reason then does our *Saviour* denounce  
 XXX. so heavy a *Woe* against such Teachers. Of old in  
 the like case God by his *Prophet* severely threatens  
 the Priests of the *Jewish Church*, for not instruct-  
 ing the People in the Knowledge of God, *Hos. 4.*  
*6. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: be-*  
*cause thou hast rejected knowledge: I will also reject thee:*  
*thou shalt be no more a Priest to me: seeing thou hast*  
*forgotten the Law of thy God, I will also forget thy*  
*Children.* God, you see, lays the ruin of so many  
 Souls at their doors, and will require their Blood  
 at their Hands. So many as perish for want of  
 Knowledge, and eternally miscarry by being de-  
 prived of the necessary means of Salvation, their  
 Destruction shall be charged upon those who *have ta-*  
*ken away the Key of Knowledge, and shut the Kingdom*  
*of Heaven against Men.*

And it is just with God to punish such Persons,  
 not only as the Occasion, but as the Authors of their  
 Ruin. For who can judge otherwise, but that they  
 who deprive Men of the necessary Means to any  
 End, do purposely design to hinder them of attain-  
 ing that End? And whatever may be pretended in  
 this Case; to deprive Men of the Holy Scriptures,  
 and to keep them ignorant of the Service of God,  
 and yet while they do so, to make a shew of an ear-  
 nest desire of their Salvation, is just such a Mockery,  
 as if one of you that is a Master should tell his  
 Prentice, how much you desire he should thrive in  
 the World, and be a rich Man, but all the while  
 keep him ignorant of his Trade in order to his be-  
 ing rich; and with the strictest care imaginable con-  
 ceals from him the best means of Learning, that  
 whereby alone he is likely to thrive and get an  
 Estate. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites.*

By what hath been discoursed upon this Argument,  
 you will easily perceive where the Application is like  
 to fall. For the *Woe* denounced by our *Saviour*  
 here in the *Text* against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*,  
 falls



falls every whit as heavy upon the *Pastors* and *Teachers* SERM. of the *Roman Church*. They have taken away the XXX. Key of Knowledge with a witness ; not only depriving the People of the right Understanding of the Scriptures, but of the very use of them. As if they were so afraid they should understand them, that they dare not suffer them so much as to be acquainted with them.

This Tyranny *that Church* hath exercised over those of her Communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees : For as by the Inundation of *Barbarous Nations* upon the *Roman Empire*, the *Romans* lost their language by degrees, so the Governors of that Church still kept up the Scriptures and the Service of God in the *Latin Tongue* ; which at last was wholly unknown to the Common People. And about the *ninth* and *tenth Centuries*, when by the general Consent of all their own *Historians* gross darkness and ignorance covered this part of the World, the *Pope* and the *Priests* took away the *Key of Knowledge*, and did (as I may say) put it under the Door for several Ages ; till the *Reformation* fetched it out again, and rubbed off the Rust of it.

And I profess seriously, that hardly any thing in the World was ever to me more astonishing, than this uncharitable and cruel usage to the People in the Church of *Rome*. And I cannot tell which to wonder at most, the insolence of their Governors in imposing upon Men this senseless way of serving God, or the Patience shall I call it, or rather Stupidity of the People in enduring to be so intolerably abused. Why should reasonable Creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous Rate ? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the Will of God ; and as if that which every Man ought to do, were not fit for every Man to know : As if the Common People had only Bodies to be present at the Service of God, but no Souls ; or as if they were all distracted

SERM. and out of their Wits, and it were a dangerous  
XXX. thing to let in the Light upon them.

But to speak more distinctly. There are *two* things we charge them withal, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick *Service of God* in an unknown Tongue; and depriving the People of the use of the *Scriptures*. And I shall first tell you what we have to say against these things, and then consider what they pretend for them.

1. As for their performing the Service of God in a Tongue unknown to the People. And I begin with St. Paul, who in his first *Epistle* to the *Corinthians* hath a whole Chapter on purpose to shew the unreasonableness of this thing, and how contrary it is to the Edification of *Christians*. His Discourse is so plain and so well known, that I shall not particularly insist upon it. *Erasmus* in his *Annotations* upon this Chapter, breaks out (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the Church of *Rome* in his time. *Hac in re mirum quam mutata sit Ecclesie consuetudo*: “ It is wonderful (says he) how the Custom  
“ of the Church is altered in this matter. St. Paul  
“ had rather speak five Words with understanding, and  
“ so as to teach others, than ten thousand in an un-  
“ known Tongue.” Why does the Church doubt to follow so great an Authority, or rather how dares she to dissent from it?

As for the Practice of the ancient Church let *Origen* bear witness. “ The *Grecians* (saith he) in  
“ their Prayers use the *Greek*, and the *Romans* the  
“ *Latin* Tongue; and so every one according to his  
“ Language prayeth unto God, and praiseth him  
“ as he is able.

And not only in *Origen's* time, but for more than the first six hundred years, the Service of God was always performed in an known Tongue. And this the learned Men of their own Church do not deny. And Cardinal *Cajetan* (as *Cassander* tells us) said it  
was

was much better this Custom were restored ; and being re-  
 proved for saying so, he said he learned it from SERM. XXX.  
*St. Paul.* And *Bellarmino* himself confesseth that the  
*Armenians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Russians,* and  
 others, do use their own Language in their Litur-  
 gies at this day.

But it is otherwise now in the Church of *Rome*,  
 and hath been for several Ages. And it seems they  
 lay great stress upon it, not only as a thing of great  
 Use, but Necessity. For Pope *Gregory* the VII.  
 forbids the Prince of *Bobemia* to permit the People  
 the Celebration of divine Offices in the *Sclavonian*  
 Tongue; and commands him to oppose them here-  
 in with all his Forces. It seems he thought it a cause  
 worthy the fighting for ; and that it were much bet-  
 ter the People should be killed, than suffered to un-  
 derstand their Prayers.

But let us reason this matter a little calmly with  
 them. Is it necessary for Men to understand any  
 thing they do in Religion ? And is not Prayer one  
 of the most solemn parts of Religion ? And why then  
 should not Men understand their Prayers as well as  
 any thing else they do in Religion ? Is it good that  
 People should understand their private Prayers ?  
 that (we thank them) they allow, and why not Pub-  
 lick as well ? Is there less of Religion in Publick  
 Prayers ? Is God less honoured by them ? or are we  
 not as capable of being edified and of having our  
 Hearts and Affections moved and excited by them ?  
 Where then lies the difference ? The more I confi-  
 der it the more I am at a loss, what tolerable Rea-  
 son any Man can give why People should not under-  
 stand their publick Devotions as well as their pri-  
 vate. If Men cannot heartily and devoutly pray a-  
 lone, without understanding what they ask of God,  
 no more (say I) can they heartily and devoutly join  
 in the publick Prayers which are made by the Priest,  
 without understanding what they are. If it be e-  
 nough for the Priest to understand them, why  
 P 4 should

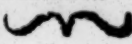


SERM. should not the Priest only be present at them ; unless  
 XXX. the People do not meet to worship God, but only to  
 wait upon the Priest. But by saying the Priest understands them, it seems it is better some body should understand them than not ; and why is not that which is good for the Priest good for the People ?

So that the true state of the *Controversy* is, whether it be fit that the People should be edified in the Service of God ; and whether it be fit the Church should order things contrary to Edification ? For it is plain that the Service of God in an unknown Tongue is useless and unprofitable to the People : Nay, it is evidently no publick Service of God when the Priest only understands it. For how can they be said to be *publick Prayers* if the People do not join in them ? And how can they join in that they do not understand ? and to what purpose are *Lessons of Scripture* read, if People are to learn nothing by them ? And how should they learn when they do not understand ? This is as if one should pretend to teach a Man *Greek* by reading in Lectures every day out of an *Arabick* and *Persian* Book, of which he understands not one Syllable.

2. As to their depriving the People of the use of the *Holy Scriptures*. Our blessed Saviour exhorts the *Jews* to *search the Scriptures* ; and St. Paul chargeth the Christians that *the Word of God should dwell richly in them* ; and the ancient *Fathers* of the Church do most frequently and earnestly recommend to the People the reading and study of the *Scriptures* : How comes the case now to be so altered ? Sure the Word of God is not changed ; that certainly abides and continues the same for ever.

I shall by and by examine what the Church of *Rome* pretends in excuse of this Sacrilege. In the mean time I do not see what considerable Objections can be made against the Peoples reading of the *Scriptures*, which would not have held as well against the writing and publishing of them at first in a Language

guage understood by the People: As the *Old Testa-* SERM.  
*ment* was by the *Jews*, and the *Epistles* of the XXX.  
*Apostles* by the *Churches* to whom they were written,   
 and the *Gospels* both by *Jews* and *Greeks*. Were  
 there no difficulties and obscurities then in the *Script-*  
*ures*, capable of being wrested by the unstable and  
 unlearned? Were not People then liable to error,  
 and was there no danger of Heresy in those times?  
 And yet these are their great Objections against put-  
 ting the Scriptures into the hands of the People.  
 Which is just like their arguing against giving the  
 Cup to the Laity from the inconveniency of their  
*Beards*, least some of the consecrated Wine should  
 be spilt upon them: As if *Errors* and *Beards* were  
 Inconveniencies lately sprung up in the World,  
 and which Mankind were not liable to in the first  
 Ages of Christianity.

But if there were the same Dangers and Inconve-  
 niencies in all Ages, this Reason makes against the  
 publishing of the Scriptures to the People at first, as  
 much as against permitting them the use of them  
 now. And in truth all these Objections are against  
 the Scripture itself: And that which the Church of  
*Rome* would find fault with if they durst, is, that  
 there should be any such *Book* in the World, and  
 that it should be in any Bodies hands, learned or un-  
 learned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are so  
 capable of doing mischief with it as Men of Wit  
 and Learning. So that at the bottom, if they would  
 speak out, the Quarrel is against the Scriptures them-  
 selves. This is too evident by the Counsel given to  
 Pope *Julius III.* by the Bishops met at *Bononia* to  
 consult about the Establishment of the *Roman See*:  
 Where among other things they gave this as their last  
 Advice, and as the greatest and weightiest of all,  
*That by all means as little of the Gospel as might be,*  
*especially in the Vulgar Tongue, should be read to the Peo-*  
*ple; and that little which was in the Mass ought to be*  
*sufficient: neither should it be permitted to any mortal*

SERM. *to read more.* For so long (say they) as Men were con-  
 XXX. *tented with that little, all things went well with them*

*but quite otherwise, since more was commonly read*  
 And speaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable Testimony and Commendation of it; *This in short is that Book which, above all others, has raised those Tempests, and Whirlwinds which we were almost carried away with. And in truth, if any one diligently considers it, and compares it with what is done in our Church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our Doctrine not only to be very different from it, but repugnant to it.* If this be the case, they do like the rest of the Children of this World presently enough in their Generation: Can we blame 'em for being against the Scriptures, when the Scriptures are acknowledged to be so clearly against them? But surely no body that considereth these things would be of that Church, which is brought by the undeniable Evidence of the Things themselves to this shameful confession, *that several of their Doctrines and Practices are very contrary to the Word of God.*

Much more might have been said against the Practices of the Church of *Rome* in these two particulars, but this is sufficient.

I shall in the *second* place consider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in justification of so contumelious an Affront to Mankind, so great a Tyranny and Cruelty to the Souls of Men? Hath God forbidden the People to look into the Scriptures? No; quite contrary. Was it the Practice of the ancient Church to lay this restraint upon Men; or to celebrate the Service of God in an unknown Tongue? Our Adversaries themselves have not the Face to pretend this. I shall truly represent the substance of what they say in these *two* Points.

I. As to the Service of God in an unknown Tongue they say these four things for themselves.

I. That



1. That the People do exercise a general Devotion, SERM.  
and come with an intention to serve God; and that XXX.  
accepted, tho' they do not particularly understand  
the Prayers that are made, and the Lessons that are  
read.

But is this all that is intended in the Service of  
God? does not St. *Paul* expressly require more? *that*  
the Understanding of the People should be edified  
by the particular Service that is performed? And  
what is done be not particularly understood, he  
tells us the People are not edified, nor can say *Amen*  
to the Prayers and Thanksgivings that are put up to  
God; and that any Man that should come in and  
see the People serving of God in this unprofitable and  
unreasonable manner, would conclude that they  
were mad.

And if there be any general Devotion in the Peo-  
ple, it is because in general they understand what  
they are about; and why may they not as well  
understand the particular Service that is performed,  
that so they might exercise a particular Devotion?  
So that they are devout no farther than they under-  
stand; and consequently as to what they do not un-  
derstand, had every whit as good be absent.

2. They say, the Prayers are to God, and he un-  
derstands them; and that is enough. But what  
harm were it, if all they that pray understood them  
also? Or indeed how can Men pray to God without  
understanding what they ask of him? Is not Prayer  
a part of the Christian worship? and is not that a  
reasonable Service? and is any Service reasonable that  
is not directed by our Understandings, and accom-  
panied with our Hearts and Affections.

But then what say they to the *Lessons* and Exhor-  
tations of Scripture, which are likewise read to the  
People in an unknown Tongue? are these directed to  
God, or to the People only? And are they not  
design'd by God for their instruction; and read  
either to that purpose or to none? And is it possible

to

SERM. to instruct Men by what they do not understand?  
 XXX. This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by  
 concealing from the People the things which they  
 should learn. Is it not all one, as to all purposes of  
 Edification, as if the Scriptures were not read, or  
 any thing else in the place of them? as they many  
 times do their *Legends*, which the wiser sort among  
 them do not believe when they read them. For all  
 things are alike to them that understand none; as all  
 things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows  
 no Difference of things; it is only Knowledge that  
 can distinguish.

3. They say that some do, at least in some measure, understand the particular Prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the rest; and more than the Church either desires or intends. For if they desired it, they might order their Service so, as every Man might understand it.

4. They say that it is convenient that God should be served and worshipped in the same Language all the World over. Convenient for whom? For God? or for the *People*? Not for God surely. For he understands all other Languages as well as *Latin*, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly it cannot be so convenient for the *People*, because they generally understand no Language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they should not understand what they do in the Service of God. But perhaps they mean that is convenient for the *Roman Church* to have it so; because this will look like an Argument that they are the *Catholick* or Universal Church, when the Language which was originally theirs shall be the Universal Language in which all Nations shall serve God; and by this means also they may bring all Nations to be of their Religion, and yet make them never the wiser; and this is a very great Convenience, because Knowledge is a troublesome thing, and Ignorance

very quiet and peaceable, rendering Men fit to be governed, and unfit to dispute.

SERM.

XXX.

II. As to their depriving the People of the Scriptures, the sum of what they say may be reduced to these *three* Heads.

1. That the Church can give leave to Men to read the Scriptures. But this not without great Trouble and Difficulty : There must be a License for it under the Hand of the Bishop or Inquisitor, by the Advice of the Priest or Confessor, concerning the Fitness of the Person that desires this Privilege : And we may be sure they will think none fit, but those of whom they have the greatest Confidence and Security : And whoever presumes to do it otherwise, is to be denied Absolution ; which is, as much as in them lies, to damn Men for presuming to read the Word of God without their Leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in *England*, where they hold their People upon more slippery Terms, yet this Privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full Possession of their Power, and have the People perfectly under their Yoke.

2. They tell us they instruct the People otherwise. This indeed were something if they did it to purpose ; but generally they do it very sparingly and slightly. Their Sermons are commonly made up of feigned Stories and Miracles of *Saints*, and Exhortations to the Worship of them, (and especially of the Blessed *Virgin*) and of their Images and Relicks. And for the Truth of this I appeal to the innumerable Volumes of their *Sermons* and *Postils* in Print ; which I suppose are none of their worst. I am sure *Erasmus* says that in his Time in several Countries, the People did scarce once in half a Year hear a profitable Sermon to exhort them to true Piety. Indeed they allow the People some *Catechisms* and *Manuals* of Devotion ; and yet

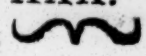


SERM. yet in many of them they have the Conscience and  
 XXX. the Confidence to *steal away the second Commandment*  
 in the face of the *eighth*.

But to bring the matter to a Point ; if those helps of instruction are agreeable to the Scriptures, why are they so afraid the People should read the Scriptures ; if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them ?

3. They say that People are apt to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, and that the promiscuous use of them hath been the great occasion of Heresies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very best things in the World, that they are liable to be abused : Health and Light and Liberty, as well as Knowledge. But must all these be therefore taken away ? This very Inconvenience of Peoples wresting the Scriptures to their own Ruin, St. *Peter* takes notice of in his Days ; but he does not therefore forbid Men the reading of them, as his most prudent Successors have done since. Suppose the reading of the Scriptures hath been the occasion of Heresies ; were there ever more than in the first Ages of Christianity ? And yet neither the Apostles nor their Successors ever prescribed this Remedy. But are they in earnest ? Must not Men know the Truth for fear of falling into Error ? Because Men may possibly miss their way at Noon-day, must they never travel but in the Night, when they are sure to lose it ?

And when all is done, this is not true, that Heresies have sprung from this Cause. They have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the Scriptures neither were, nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the History and Experience of all Ages. I am well assured the ancient Fathers were of another mind. St. *Chrysostom* says, *If Men would be conversant in the Scriptures and attend to them, they would not only not fall into errors themselves, but rescue those that are deceived*.

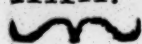
ed: And that the Scriptures would instruct Men SERM. XXX.  
 both in right Opinions and a good Life. And St.   
 Hierome more expressly to our purpose, That in-  
 finite Evils arise from the Ignorance of the Scriptures;  
 and that from that cause the most part of Heresies have  
 come.

But if what they say were true, is not this to lay  
 the blame of all the ancient Heresies upon the ill  
 Management of things by our Saviour, and his A-  
 postles, and the holy Fathers of the Church for so  
 many Ages, and their imprudent dispensing of the  
 Scriptures to the People? This indeed is to charge  
 the matter home; and yet this Consequence is un-  
 avoidable. For the Church of Rome cannot justify  
 the Piety and Prudence of their present Practices,  
 without accusing all these.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to  
 both these Practices is this. That though these  
 things were otherwise in the Apostles times, and in  
 the Ancient Church, yet the Church hath Power to  
 alter them according to the Exigence and Circum-  
 stances of time. I have purposely reserved this for  
 the last Place, because it is their last refuge; and if  
 this fail them they are gone.

To shew the Weakness of this Pretence, we will,  
 if they please, take it for granted, that the Gover-  
 nours of the Church have in no Age more Power  
 than the Apostles had in theirs. Now St. Paul tells us,  
 2 Cor. 10. 8. That the Authority which the Apostles  
 had given them from the Lord, was only *for edifi-  
 cation but not for destruction*: And the same St.  
 Paul makes it the business of a whole Chapter to  
 shew that the performing the Publick Service of  
 God, and particularly praying in an unknown  
 Tongue, are contrary to Edification; from which  
 Premises the Conclusion is plain, That the Apostles them-  
 selves had no Authority to appoint the Service of God  
 to be performed in an unknown Tongue; and surely  
 it

SERM. it is Arrogance for the Church in any Age to pretend  
 XXX. greater Authority than the Apostles had.



This is the sum of what our *Adversaries* say in justification of themselves in these Points. And there is no doubt, but that Men of Wit and Confidence will always make a shift to say something for any thing; and some way or other blanch over the blackest and most absurd things in the World. But I leave it to the judgment of Mankind whether any thing be more unreasonable than to tell Men in effect, that is fit they should understand as little of Religion as is possible; that God hath published a very dangerous Book, with which it is not safe for the People to be familiarly acquainted; that our Blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, and the ancient *Christian Church* for more than six hundred Years, were not wise Managers of Religion, nor prudent Dispensers of the Scriptures; but like fond and foolish Fathers, put a Knife and a Sword into the Hands of their Children, with which they might easily have foreseen what mischief they would do to themselves and others. And who would not chuse to be of such a Church which is provided of such excellent and effectual means of Ignorance, such wise and infallible Methods for the Prevention of Knowledge in the People, and such Variety of close Shutters to keep out the Light?

I have chosen to insist upon this Argument, because it is so very plain, that the most ordinary Capacity may judge of this Usage and Dealing with the Souls of Men; which is so very gross, that every Man must needs be sensible of it; because it toucheth Men in the Common Rights of Human Nature, which belong to them as much as the Light of Heaven, and the Air we breath in.

It requires no Subtilty of Wit, no Skill in Antiquity, to understand these Controversies between us and the Church of *Rome*. For there are no *Faithers* to be pretended on both sides in these Questions:



ons: They yield we have Antiquity on ours: And we refer it to the common Sense of Mankind, which Church, that of *Rome* or *Ours*, hath all the Right and Reason in the World on her side in these Debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over Christians, the Governors of their Church, or ours? Who use the People like Sons and Freemen, and who like Slaves? Who feed the Flock of Christ committed to them, and who take the Childrens Bread from them? Who they are that when their Children ask Bread, for Bread give them a Stone, and for an Egg a Serpent? I mean the *Legends* of their *Saints*, instead of the *Holy Scriptures* which are able to make Men wise unto Salvation: And who are they that lie most justly under the Suspicion of Errors and Corruptions, they who bring their Doctrine and Practices into the open Light, and are willing to have them tryed by the true Touchstone, *the Word of God*; or they who shun the Light, and decline all manner of Trial and Examination? And who are most likely to carry on a worldly Design, they who drive a Trade of such mighty Gain and Advantage under Pretence of Religion, and make such Markets of the Ignorance and Sins of the People; or we whom Malice it self cannot charge with serving any Worldly Design, by any allowed Doctrine or Practice of our Religion? For we make no Money of the Mistakes of the People, nor do we fill their Heads with vain Fears of new Places of Torment, to make them willing to empty their Purfes in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not, like them, pretend a mighty Bank and Treasure of Merits in the Church, which they sell to the People for ready Money, giving them Bills of Exchange from the *Pope to Purgatory*; when they who grant them have no reason to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other World.

SERM.  
XXX.

SERM.

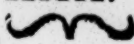
XXX.

For our parts, we have no fear that our People should understand Religion too well: We could wish with *Moses, that all the Lord's People were Prophets*: We should be heartily glad the People would read the Holy Scriptures more diligently, being sufficiently assured that is it their own Fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: We have no Doctrines or Practices contrary to Scripture, and consequently no occasion to keep it close from the sight of the People, or to hide any of the Commandments of God from them: We leave these mean Arts to those who stand in need of them.

In a Word, there is nothing which God hath said to Men, which we desire should be concealed from them: Nay, we are willing the People should examine what we teach, and bring all our Doctrines to *the Law and to the Testimony*; that if they be not according to *this Rule*, they may neither believe them nor us. 'Tis only things false and adulterate which shun the Light and fear the Touchstone. We have that Security of the truth of our Religion, and of the Agreeableness of it to the Word of God, that honest Confidence of the Goodness of our Cause, that we do not forbid the People to read the best Books our Adversaries can write against it.

And now let any impartial Man judge whether this be not a better Argument of a good Cause to leave Men at Liberty to try the grounds of their Religion, than the Courses which are taken in the Church of *Rome*, to awe Men with an *Inquisition*; and, as much as is possible, to keep the Common People in Ignorance, not only of what their late Adversaries, the *Protestants*, but their chief and ancient Adversary, the *Scriptures*, have to say against them.

A Man had need of more than common Security of the Skill and Integrity of those to whom he perfectly

fectly resigns his Understanding ; this is too great a SERM.  
Trust to be reposed in human Frailty, and too XXX.  
strong a Temptation to others to impose upon us,   
to abuse our Blindness, and to make their own ends  
of our voluntary Ignorance and easy Credulity.  
This is such a Folly as if a rich Man should make his  
Physician his Heir ; which is to tempt him either to  
destroy him or to let him die, for his own Interest.  
So he that trusts the Care of his Soul with other Men,  
and at the same time by *irrecoverable Deed* settles his  
Understanding upon them, lays too great a Temptation  
before them to seduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon our selves. What  
cause have we to bless God who are so happily re-  
scued from that more than *Ægyptian* Darkness and  
Bondage, wherein this Nation was detained for se-  
veral Ages ! Who are delivered out of the hands of  
those cruel Task-Masters, who required Brick with-  
out Straw ; that Men should be religious without  
competent Understanding, and work out their own  
Salvation while they denied them the means of all  
others the most necessary to it ; who are so unchari-  
table as to allow us no Salvation out of their Church,  
and yet so unreasonable as to deny us the very best  
means of Salvation when we are in it.

Our Fore-fathers thought it a mighty Privilege  
to have the Word of God restored to them and the  
Publick Prayers and Service of God celebrated in a  
known Tongue. Let us use this inestimable Privilege  
with great Modesty and Humility ; not to the nou-  
rishing of Pride and Self-conceit, of Division and  
Faction ; but, as the *Apostle* exhorts, *Let the Word*  
*of God dwell richly in you, in all Wisdom ; and let the*  
*Peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are*  
*called in one body ; and be ye thankful.*

It concerns us mightily (with which Admonition  
I shall conclude) both for the Honour and Support  
of our Religion, to be at better Union among our  
selves, and not to divide about lesser things ; and so



to demean our selves, as to take from our Adversaries all those Pretences whereby they would justify themselves, or at least extenuate the Guilt of that heavy Charge, which falls every whit as justly upon them as ever it did upon the *Scribes and Pharisees*, of taking away the Key of Knowledge, and shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against Men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering those that are entering to go in.

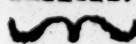
# SERMON XXXI.

*The Parable of the Ten Virgins.*

Preached before her Royal Highness the Princess *Anne of Denmark*, at *Tunbridge-Wells*, September the 2d, 1688.

✕ MATTHEW XXV. 1, 2, &c.

*Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And Five of them were Wise, and Five were Foolish, &c.*

SERM. XXXI.  MY Design at present is to explain this Parable, and to make such Observations upon it as seem most naturally, and without squeezing the Parable, to spring from it: And then to make some Application of it to our selves.

Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto SERM.  
*Ten Virgins* : By the Kingdom of Heaven is meant XXXI.  
the State and Condition of things under the Gospel ;  
By the *Ten Virgins*, those who embraced the Profession of it, which is here represented by their *taking their Lamps and going forth to meet the Bridegroom* : In Allusion to the ancient Custom of *Marriages*, in which the *Bridegroom* was wont to lead home his *Bride* in the Night by the Light of *Lamps or Torches*.

But this Profession was not in all equally firm and fruitful ; and therefore those who persevered and continued stedfast in this Profession, notwithstanding all the Temptations and Allurements of the World, and all the fierce Storms and Assaults of Persecution to which this Profession was exposed ; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit, and abound in the Graces and Virtues of a good Life ; These are the *Wise Virgins* : But those who either deserted this Profession, or did not bring forth Fruits answerable to it, are the *Foolish Virgins*.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we consider how the *Parable* represents them, *vers. 3, 4.* *They that were foolish took their Lamps, and took no Oyl with them : But the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their Lamps.* So that they both took their *Lamps*, and both lighted them, and therefore must both be suppos'd to have some *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at first, as appears from *verse 8.* where the *foolish Virgins* said unto the *wise*, *give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.* They had it seems some *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at first, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future Supply. And therefore the difference between the *wise* and *foolish Virgins* did not, as some have imagin'd, consist in this, that the *wise Virgins* had *Oyl*, but the *foolish* had none ; but in this, that the *foolish* had taken no care for a further supply, after the *Oyl* which which was at first

SERM. put into their Lamps was spent, as the wise had  
 XXXI. done; who besides the Oyl that was in their Lamps,  
 carried likewise a *Reserve* in some other *Vessel*, for a  
 continual supply of the *Lamp*, as there should be  
 occasion; *the wise took Oyl in their Vessels with their  
 Lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, That they who  
 are represented by the *wise Virgins* had not only  
 embraced the Profession of the *Christian* Religion,  
 as the *foolish Virgins* also had done, for they both  
 had their Lamps lighted; but they likewise per-  
 sever'd in that Profession, and brought forth Fruits  
 answerable to it. For by Oyl in their *Lamps*, and  
 the first lighting of them, which was common to  
 them both, is meant that solemn Profession of *Faith*  
 and *Repentance* which all *Christians* make in *Baptism*.  
 By that farther *supply of Oyl*, which the *wise Virgins*  
 only took care to provide, is signified our Constancy  
 and Perseverance in this Profession, together with  
 the Fruits of the Spirit, and the Improvement of  
 the *Grace* received in *Baptism* by the Practice and  
 Exercise of all the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good  
 Life, whereby Men are fitted and prepar'd for *Death*  
 and *Judgment*, which are here represented to us by  
 the *coming of the Bridegroom*.

This being plainly the main Scope and Intention  
 of the *Parable*, I shall explain the rest of it, as there  
 shall be occasion, under the several *Observations*  
 which I shall raise from the several parts of it.  
 And they shall be these.

*First*, I observe the charitable *Decorum* which our  
*Blessed Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest  
 of his *Parables*; as if He would fain suppose and  
 hope, that among those who enjoy the *Gospel*, and  
 make profession of it, the Number of them that are  
 truly good, is equal to those that are bad. For our  
*Blessed Saviour* here represents the whole Number of  
 the *Professors* of *Christianity* by *Ten Virgins*, the  
 half whereof the *Parable* seems to suppose to be truly  
 and



and really good, and to persevere in goodness unto SERM.  
 the end, *ver. 1. 2. Then shall the Kingdom of Hea-XXXI.*  
*ven be likened unto Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps,*  
*and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of*  
*them were wise, and five were foolish.*

Secondly, I observe how very common it is for Men to neglect this great Concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a due Preparation for another World; and how willing Men are to deceive themselves herein, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the Description of the *foolish Virgins*, who had provided no supply of Oyl in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furnished themselves by borrowing or buying of others, *ver. 8, 9, 10.*

Thirdly, I observe, That even the better sort of Christians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for Death and Judgment: *Whilst the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept*; even the *wise Virgins* as well as the *Foolish*.

Fourthly, I observe further, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great Work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. Thus the *Foolish Virgins* did, and what a sad Confusion and Hurry they were in we may see, *ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. And at midnight there was a Cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. At midnight*; the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other: *Then all those Virgins arose, and trimmed their Lamps: and the Foolish said unto the Wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out: But the Wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves.* And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time proved to be, we find, *ver. 10, 11, 12. And whilst they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that*

SERM. *were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the*  
 XXXI. *Door was shut. Afterwards came also the other Vir-*  
 gins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: But he answer-  
 ed and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.

*Fifthly*, I observe that there is no such thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, That no Man can do more than needs, and is his Duty to do, by way of Preparation for another World. For when the *Foolish Virgins* would have begg'd of the *Wise* some Oil for their Lamps, the *Wise* answered, not so left there be not enough for us and you. It was only the *Foolish Virgins* that had entertain'd this foolish Conceit, That there might be an *Overplus of Grace and Merit* in others sufficient to supply their Want: But the *Wise* knew not of any that they had to spare, but supposed all that they had little enough to qualify them for the Reward of Eternal Life; *Not so*, say they *μὴ ποτε*, left at any time, left when there should be Need and Occasion, all that we have done, or could do, would prove little enough for ourselves.

*Sixthly and lastly*, I observe, that if we could suppose any Persons to be so over-good, as to have more Grace and Goodness than needs to qualify them for the Reward of Eternal Life, yet there is no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *Over-plus of Grace and Virtue* from one Man to another. For we see, ver. 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of *borrowing*, or *buying* Oil of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own Nature impracticable, that one Sinner should be in a Condition to merit for another.

All these *Observations* seem to have some fair and probable Foundation in some part or other of this *Parable*; and most of them, I am sure, are agreeable to the main Scope and Intention of the whole. I shall speak to them severally and as briefly as I can.

*First*, I observe the charitable *Decorum*, which our *Blessed Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his *Parables*; as if he would fain suppose and

and hope, that among those who enjoy the Gospel, SERM.  
and make Profession of it, the Number of those who XXXI.  
make a firm and sincere Profession of it, and perse-  
vere in Goodness to the end, is equal to the Num-  
ber of those who do not make good their Profession,  
or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least  
Stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take No-  
tice, that our *Blessed Saviour* in this *Parable* repre-  
sents the whole Number of the *Professors* of *Chri-*  
*stianity* by *Ten Virgins*, the half of which the *Pa-*  
*rable* seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the  
*Christian Profession*, and to have persever'd therein  
to the last; *The Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened un-*  
*to Ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went*  
*forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were*  
*wise, and five were foolish.*

And this *Decorum* our *Blessed Saviour* seems care-  
fully to observe in his other *Parables*: As in the  
*Parable* of the *Prodigal*, *Luke 15.* where for *one*  
Son that left his Father and took riotous Courses,  
there was *another* that stayed always with him, and  
continued constant to his Duty. And in the *Para-*  
*ble* of the *Ten Talents*, which immediately follows  
that of the *Ten Virgins*, *two* are supposed to im-  
prove the Talents committed to them, for *one* that  
made no Improvement of his. He that had five *Ta-*  
*lents* committed to him, made them *five more*, and  
he that had *two* gained *other two*; and only he  
that had but *one Talent*, hid it in the *Earth*, and  
made no Improvement of it. And in the *Parable*  
which I am now upon, the Number of the *Profes-*  
*sors of Christianity*, who took care to fit and pre-  
pare themselves for the *coming of the Bridegroom*,  
is supposed equal to the Number of those who did  
not.

And whether this be particularly intended in the  
*Parable* or not, it may however be thus far instructive  
to us; That we should be so far from lessening the  
Number



SERM. Number of *true Christians*, and from confining the  
 XXXI. *Church of Christ* within a narrow Compass, so as to  
 exclude out of its *Communion* the far greatest part of  
 the *Professors of Christianity*; that on the contrary,  
 we should enlarge the *Kingdom of Christ*, as much  
 as we can, and extend our Charity to all *Churches*  
 and *Christians*, of what *Denomination* soever, as far  
 as Regard to Truth, and to the Foundations of the  
*Christian Religion*, will permit us to believe and  
 hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a  
 little on the favourable and charitable Part, than to  
 be mistaken on the censorious and damning side.

And for this reason perhaps it is, that our *Blessed Saviour* thought fit to frame his *Parables* with so remarkable a *Byass* to the charitable side: Partly to instruct us to extend our Charity towards all *Christian Churches*, and *Professors of the Christian Religion*, and our good Hopes concerning them, as far as with Reason we can: And partly to remove the Uncharitableness of the *Jews*, who positively excluded all the rest of Mankind, besides themselves, from all Hopes of Salvation. An odious Temper, which, to the infinite Scandal of the *Christian Name* and Profession, hath prevailed upon some *Christians* to that notorious Degree, as not only to shut out all the *Reform'd Part of the Western Church*, almost equal in Number to themselves, from all Hopes of Salvation under the Notion of *Hereticks*; but likewise to unchurch all the other Churches of the *Christian World*, which are of much greater Extent and Number than themselves, that do not own Subjection to the *Bishop of Rome*: And this they do by declaring it to be of necessity to Salvation for every Creature to be subject to the *Roman Bishop*. And this Supremacy of the *Bishop of Rome* over all *Christian Churches*, *Bellarmino* calls the *Sum of the Christian Religion*. So that the *Roman Communion* is plainly founded in *Schism*, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable Principle that can be, namely, *That they are the only true Church of Christ*,

*Christ, out of which none can be saved:* which was SERM. the very *Schism* of the *Donatists*. And in this they **XXXI.** are so positive, that the learned Men of that Church, in their Disputes and Writings, are much more inclinable to believe the Salvation of *Heathens* to be possible, than of any of those *Christians*, whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*. The *Faith* of the Church of *Rome* is certainly none of the best; but one of the greatest and most essential Virtues of the *Christian Religion*, I mean *Charity*, I doubt they have the least Share of any *Christian Church* this Day in the World.

*Secondly*, I observe, not from any particular *Circumstance*, but from the main Scope and Design of this *Parable*, How very apt a great part of *Christians* are to neglect this great Concernment of their Souls, viz. a careful and due Preparation for another World; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take the Pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the Description of the *Foolish Virgins*, who had provided no *Supply of Oyl* in their *Vessels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming, would have furnished themselves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *vers.* 8, 9, 10. They contented themselves, with having their *Lamps* lighted at their first setting out to meet the *Bridegroom*, that is, with their being admitted into the *Profession of Christianity* by *Baptism*, but either were not steadfast in this *Profession*, or were not careful to adorn it with the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good Life.

And the true Reason why Men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this Matter, and are so hardly brought to those things wherein Religion mainly consists, I mean the Fruits of the Spirit, and the Practice of real Goodness; I say, the true Reason of this is, because they are extremely desirous to reconcile,

SERM. concile, if it were possible, the Hopes of Eternal  
 XXXI. Happiness in another World, with a Liberty to live  
 as they list in this present World: They are loth to be  
 at the Trouble and Drudgery of mortifying their  
 Lusts, and governing their Passions, and bridling  
 their Tongues, and practising all those Duties which  
 are comprehended in those *two great Commandments*  
 of the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: They would  
 fain gain the Favour of God, and make their Call-  
 ing and Election sure, by some easier way than by  
*giving all Diligence* to add to their *Faith* and *Know-*  
*ledge the Graces and Virtues* of a good Life.

For the plain Truth of the matter is, Men had  
 rather that Religion should be any thing than what  
 indeed it is, *viz.* the thwarting and crossing of their  
 vicious Inclinations, the curing of their evil and cor-  
 rupt Affections, the due Care and Government of  
 their unruly Appetites and Passions, their sincere En-  
 deavour, and the constant Practice of Holiness and  
 Virtue in their Lives: And therefore they had much  
 rather have something that might handsomely palliate  
 and excuse their evil Inclinations and practices, than  
 to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and  
 rather than amend and reform their wicked Lives,  
 they would be contented to make an *honourable A-*  
*mend*s and Compensation to Almighty God in some  
 other way.

This hath been the way and folly of Mankind in  
 all Ages, to defeat the great End and Design of Re-  
 ligion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something  
 else in the Place of it, which, as they think, may  
 serve the turn as well, having the Appearance of as  
 much Devotion and Respect towards God, and real-  
 ly costing them more Money and Pains, than that  
 which God requires of them. Men have ever been  
 apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please  
 themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as  
 well, or better, by some other way than that which  
 he hath prescribed and appointed for them.



By this means, and upon this *false Principle*, Religion hath ever been apt to degenerate, both among *Jews and Christians*, into external and little Observances, and into a great Zeal for lesser Things, with a total Neglect of the greater and weightier Matters of Religion; and, in a Word, into infinite *Superstitions* of one kind or other, and an arrogant Conceit of the extraordinary Righteousness and Merit of these things: In which some have proceeded to that Height, as if they could drive a strict Bargain with God for Eternal Life and Happiness: and have treated Him in so insolent a manner, by their Doctrine of the *Merit* of their *Devotions* and *good Works*, as if God were as much beholden to them for their Service and Obedience, as they are to Him for the Reward of them; which they are not afraid to say they may challenge at God's Hand, as of Right and Justice belonging to them.

Nay, so far have they carried this *Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, as not only to pretend to merit Eternal Life for themselves, but likewise to do a great deal more, for the Benefit and Advantage of others, who have not Righteousness and Goodness enough of their own: Which was the silly Conceit of the *Foolish Virgins* here in the *Parable*, as I shall have Occasion to shew more fully by and by.

And it is no great Wonder, that such easy Ways of Religion and pleasing God, are very grateful to the corrupt Nature of Man, and that Men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil Course, are glad to be of a Church which will assure Salvation to Men upon such Terms: The great Difficulty is, for Men to believe that things which are so apparently absurd and unreasonable can be true; and to persuade themselves that they can impose upon God by such Pretences of Service and Obedience, as no wise Prince or Father upon Earth is to be deluded withal by his *Subjects* or *Children*. We ought to have worthier Thoughts of God, and to consider that he is a

great

SERM. *great King*, and will be obeyed and served by his  
 XXXI. *Creatures in his own way*, and make them happy  
 upon his own Terms; and that Obedience to what  
 he commands, is better and more acceptable to him,  
 than any other Sacrifice that we can offer, which he  
 hath not required at our Hands: and likewise, that  
 he is infinitely Wise and Good; and therefore that  
 the *Laws*, which he hath given us to live by, are  
 much more likely and certain Means of our Happi-  
 ness, than any *Inventions* and *Devices* of our own.

*Thirdly*, I observe that even the better and more  
 considerate Sort of *Christians* are not so careful  
 and watchful as they ought, to prepare themselves  
 for *Death* and *Judgment*; whilst the *Bridegroom* tar-  
 ried, they all slumbred and slept. Even the *Disciples*  
 of our *Saviour*, whilst he was yet personally present  
 with them, and after a particular Charge given  
 them from his own Mouth, *Watch and pray, lest ye*  
*enter into Temptation*; yet did not keep that Guard  
 upon themselves as to *watch with him for one Hour*.  
*In many things*, says St. James, *we offend all*; even  
 the best of us: And who is there that doth not,  
 some time or other, remit of his Vigilancy and Care,  
 so as to give the Devil an Advantage, and to lie o-  
 pen to Temptation, for want of a continual Guard  
 upon himself? But then the Difference between the  
*Wise* and *Foolish Virgins* was this, that though they  
 both slept, yet the *Wise* did not let their *Lamps* go  
 out; they neither quitted their *Profession*, nor did  
 they extinguish it by a bad Life; and though when  
 the *Bridegroom* came suddenly upon them, they were  
 not so actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual  
 Vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the  
 good Disposition of their Minds, and the general  
 Course of a holy Life: Their *Lamps* might burn dim  
 for want of continual Trimming, but they had Oil  
 in their *Vessels* to supply their *Lamps*, which the  
*Foolish Virgins* had taken no Care to provide. But  
 surely the greatest Wisdom of all is to maintain a  
 continual

continual Watchfulness, that so we may not be surpris'd by the coming of the Bridegroom, and be in a Confusion when Death or Judgment shall overtake us. And blessed are those Servants, and wise indeed, whose Lamps always burn bright, and whom the Bridegroom when he comes shall find watching, and in a fit Posture and Preparation to meet Him.

Fourthly, I observe likewise, how little is to be done by us, to any good Purpose in this great work of Preparation, when it is deferr'd and put off to the Last. And thus the Foolish Virgins did: but what a sad confusion and hurry they were in at the sudden coming of the Bridegroom, when they were not only asleep, but when after they were awaken'd they found themselves altogether unprovided of that which was necessary to trim their Lamps, and to put them in a Posture to meet the Bridegroom: When they wanted that which was necessary at that very instant, but could not be provided in an instant: I say, what a Tumult and Confusion they were in, being thus surpris'd, the Parable represents to us at large, verse 6, 7, 8, 9. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those Virgins arose and trimmed their Lamps, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.

At midnight there was a cry made; that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other; when they were fast asleep, and suddenly awaken'd in great Terror, when they could not on the sudden recollect themselves, and consider what to do; when the Summons was so very short, that they had neither time to consider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And such is the Case of those who put off their Repentance and Preparation for another World, till they are surpris'd by Death and Judgment; for it comes all to one in the Issue, which of them it be.

The



SERM. XXXI. *The Parable* indeed seems more particularly to point at our *Lord's coming to Judgment*, but the case is much the same as to those who are surpris'd by *sudden Death*; such as gives them but little, or not sufficient time for so great a Work: Because such as *Death* leaves them, *Judgment* will certainly find them.

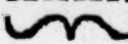
And what a miserable confusion must they needs be in, who are thus surpris'd either by the one or the other? How unfit should we be, if the *general Judgment* of the World should come upon us on the sudden, to meet that *Great Judge* at his coming, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What then shall we then be able to do in that great and universal Consternation? when the *Son of Man* shall appear in the Clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory; when the *Sun* shall be darken'd, and the *Moon* turned into blood, and all the powers of Heaven shall be shaken: when all Nature shall feel such violent Pangs and Convulsions, and the whole World shall be in a Combustion, flaming, and cracking about our Ears: When the *Heavens* shall be shrivel'd up as a Scroll when it is roll'd together, and the *Earth* shall be tofs'd from its Center, and every *Mountain* and *Island* shall be removed? What thoughts can the wisest Men then have about them, in the midst of so much Noise and Terror? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? when they shall see the *Angel* that standeth upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifting up his hand to Heaven and swearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that Time shall be no longer; as this dreadful day is described, *Rev. 10. 5, 6. and chap. 6. 15.* where Sinners are represented at the *Appearance* of this *Great Judge*, not as flying to God in hopes of Mercy, but as flying from him in utter despair of finding Mercy with him: *The Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the mighty Men, and the Rich Men, and the Great Captains, hid themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Earth; and said to the Mountains*

*and Rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of Him* SERM.  
*that sitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the* XXXI.  
*Lamb: For the Great Day of his wrath is come, and*

*who shall be able to stand?* The biggest and the bold-  
 est Sinners that ever were upon Earth, shall then flee  
 from the Face of Him, whom they have so often  
 blasphemed and denied; and shall so far despair of  
 finding Mercy with Him in that Day, who would  
 sue to Him for it no sooner, that they shall address  
 themselves to the *Mountains and Rocks*, as being  
 more pitiful and exorable than *He*; *to hide them*  
*from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and*  
*from the wrath of the Lamb: From the wrath of the*  
*Lamb, to signify unto us that nothing is more ter-*  
*rible than Meekness and Patience, when they are*  
*thoroughly provok'd and turn'd into Fury.*

In such dreadful Confusion shall all Impenitent  
 Sinners be, when they shall be surpris'd by that  
*Great and terrible Day of the Lord*: And the *Case*  
 of a *dying Sinner*, who would take no care in the  
 time of his *Life and Health* to make preparation for  
 another World, is not much more hopeful and com-  
 fortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying  
 Man can do in such a strait of time? In the midst  
 of so much Pain and Weakness of Body, and of  
 such Confusion and Amazement of Mind. With  
 what Heart can he set about so great a Work, for  
 which there is so little Time? With what face can  
 he apply himself to God in this Extremity, whom  
 he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his  
 Life? And how can he have the confidence to  
 hope, that God will hear his Cries and regard his  
 Tears, that are forc'd from him in this day of his  
 Necessity? When he is conscious to himself,  
 that in that *long day* of God's *Grace and Patience* he  
 turned a deaf Ear to all his merciful Invitations,  
 and *rejected the counsel of God against himself*. In a  
 word, how can he who *would not know, in that his*

SERM. *Day, the things which belonged to his peace, expect any*  
 XXXI. other but that they should now be for ever *hid from*  
 *his Eyes, which are ready to be clos'd in utter Dark-*  
*ness?*

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a *Death-bed Repentance*: But I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one *Example*, that I know of, in the whole *Bible*, of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean that of the *Penitent Thief* upon the *Cross*: And the Circumstances of his Case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to Men in ordinary Cases. We are not like to suffer in the Company of the *Son of God*, and of the *Saviour of the World*; and if we could do so, it is not certain that we should behave our selves towards Him so well as the *Penitent Thief* did, and make so very good an End of so very bad a Life.

And the *Parable* in the *Text* is so far from giving any Encouragement to a *Death-bed Repentance* and *Preparation*, that it rather represents their Case as desperate, who put off their *Preparation* to that Time. How ineffectual all that the *foolish Virgins* could do at that Time did in the conclusion prove, is set forth to us at large in the *Parable*; They wanted *Oyl*, but could neither *borrow* nor *buy* it: v. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. They would *then* fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by entreaty, nor for Money: First, they apply themselves to the *Wise Virgins*, for a share in the *over-plus* of their *Graces* and *Virtues*; v. 8. *the Foolish said unto the Wise, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out: But the Wise answered, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: The Wise Virgins, it seems, knew of none they had to spare: And then they are represented ironically sending the Foolish Virgins to some*  
*famous*



*famous Market* where this Oyl was pretended to be sold; v. 9. *go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your selves*: And as dying and desperate Persons are apt to catch at every Twig, and when they can see no Hopes of being saved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; so these Foolish Virgins follow the Advice, v. 10. *and whilst they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the Door was shut; and afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

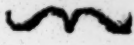
You see how little, or rather no Encouragement at all there is from any the least Circumstance in this *Parable*, for those who have delayed their Preparation for another World, till they be overtaken by *Death* or *Judgment*, to hope by any Thing that they can then do, by any Importunity which they can then use, to gain Admission into Heaven. Let those consider this with Fear and Trembling, who forget God, and neglect Religion in all their Lifetime, and yet feed themselves with vain Hopes by some *Device* or other to be admitted into Heaven at last.

*Fifthly*, I observe, that there is no such Thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, that is, that no Man can do more than needs, and than is his Duty to do, by way of *Preparation* for another World. v. 8. For when the *Foolish Virgins* would have begg'd of the *Wise* some Oyl for their *Lamps*, v. 9. *the Wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you*: It was only the *Foolish Virgins* that in the Time of their Extremity, and when they were conscious that they wanted that which was absolutely necessary to qualify them for Admission into Heaven, who had entertained this *idle Conceit*, That there might be an *Over-plus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others sufficient to supply their Want: But the

SERM. *Wise* knew not of any they had to spare, but supposed all that they had done, or could possibly do, to be little enough to qualify them for the glorious Reward of Eternal Life: *Not so* say they, *lest at any time*, that is, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should be little enough for our selves: And in this *Point* they had been plainly instructed by the *Bridegroom* himself, *But ye, when ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable Servants, and have done nothing but what was our Duty to do.*

And yet this *Conceit* of the *Foolish Virgins*, as absurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earnest by a *grave Matron*, who gives out her self to be the *Mother and Mistress of all Churches*, and the only *infallible Oracle of Truth*, I mean the *Church of Rome*, whose avowed *Doctrine* it is, That there are some Persons so excellently good, that they may do more than needs for their own Salvation: And therefore when they have done as much for themselves as in strict Duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable Consideration for Heaven, and as much as in equal Justice between God and Man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their *Friends* and begin a new *Score*; and from that time forward, may put the *Surplusage* of their good *Works* as a *Debt* upon God, to be laid up in the *publick Treasury* of the *Church*, as so many *Bills of Credit*, which the *Pope* by his *Pardons* and *Indulgences* may dispense, and place to whose Account he pleases: And out of this *Bank*, which is kept at *Rome*, those who never took care to have any Righteousness of their own, may be supplied at reasonable Rates.

To which they have added a further *Supply* of *Grace*, if there should be any need of it, by the *Sacrament of Extreme Unction*, never heard of in the *Christian Church* for many Ages; but devised,

as it were on purpose, to furnish such *foolish* SERM.  
*Virgins* with Oyl, as are here described in the Pa-XXXI.  
*table.* 

And thus by one *Device* or other they have enervated the *Christian Religion* to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true *Virtue* and *Efficacy* upon the *Hearts* and *Lives* of *Men*: And instead of the real *Fruits* of *Goodness* and *Righteousness*, it produceth little else but *Superstition* and *Folly*; or if it produce any real *Virtues*, yet even the *Virtue* of those *Virtues* is in a great measure spoil'd by their arrogant *Pretences* of *Merit* and *Super-erogation*, and is rendred insignificant to themselves by their insolent *Carriage* and *Behaviour* towards *God*.

*Sixthly* and *lastly*, If we could suppose any *Person* to be so over-grown with *Goodness*, as to have more than needs to qualify them for the *Reward* of eternal *Life*; yet there can be no *assigning* and *transferring* of this *Over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one *Man* to another. For we see that all the *Ways* that could be thought on of *begging* or *borrowing*, or *buying* Oyl of others did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own *Nature* impracticable that one *Sinner*, who owes all that he hath, and much more, to *God*, should have any thing to spare wherewithal to *merit* for another.

Indeed our *blessed Saviour* hath *merited* for us all the *reward* of eternal *Life*, upon the *condition* of *Faith* and *Repentance* and *Obedience*: But the infinite *Merit* of his *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be of no *Benefit* and *Advantage* to us, if we our selves be not really and inherently *righteous*. So *St. John* tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary *Conceit*, *Little Children*, let no man deceive you, he that doth *righteousness* is *righteous*, even as *He* is *righteous*.

If we do sincerely endeavour to please *God*, and to keep his *Commandments* in the general



SERM. Course of a holy and virtuous Life, the *Merit* of  
 XXXI. *Christ's perfect Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be avail-  
 able with God for the Acceptance of our *sincere*  
 though but *imperfect Obedience*. But if we take no  
 Care to be *righteous* and good our selves, the *per-*  
*fect Righteousness* of *Christ* will do us no good;  
 much less the *imperfect Righteousness* of any other  
 Man who is a Sinner himself. And the holiest  
 Man that ever was upon Earth, can no more *assign*  
 and make over his *Righteousness*, or *Repentance*, or  
 any part of either, to another that wants it, than a  
 Man can *bequeath* his *Wisdom* or *Learning* to his *Heir*  
 or his *Friend*: No more than a *sick Man* can be re-  
 stor'd to *Health* by virtue of the *Physick* which another  
 Man hath taken.

Let no Man therefore think of being good by a  
*Deputy*, that cannot be contented to be happy, and  
 to be saved the same way, that is, to go to *Hell*, and  
 to be tormented there in *Person*, and to go to *Hea-*  
*ven*, and be admitted into that *Place of Bliss* only  
 by *Proxy*. So that these *good Works* with a *hard*  
*Name*, and the making over the *Merit* of them to  
 others, have no manner of Foundation either in *Script-*  
*ure* or *Reason*, but are all mere *Fancy* and *Fiction* in  
*Divinity*.

The *Inference* from all this shall be the *Applicati-*  
*on* which our *Saviour* makes of this *Parable*, ver. 13.  
*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the*  
*hour wherein the son of man cometh*; as if he had said,  
 the Design of this *Parable* is to instruct us, that we  
 ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon  
 our guard, and in a constant Readiness and Prepara-  
 tion to *meet the Bridegroom*; because we know not  
 the time, of his coming to *Judgment*, nor yet, which  
 will be of the same consequence and concernment to  
 us, do any of us know the precise time of our own  
*Death*. Either of these may happen at any time,  
 and come when we least expect them. And there-  
 fore we should make the best and speediest Provision  
 that

that we can for another World, and should be con-SERM.  
tinually upon our watch and trimming our Lamps, XXXI.  
that we may not be surpris'd by either of these ;  
neither by our own *particular Death*, nor by the ge-  
neral *Judgment* of the World : *Because the Son of*  
*Man will come in a Day when we look not for Him,*  
*and at an Hour when we are not aware.*

More particularly, we should take up a present  
and effectual Resolution not to delay our *Repentance*,  
and the Reformation of our Lives, that we may not  
have that great Work to do, when we are not fit to  
do any thing ; no not to dispose of our *temporal*  
Concernments, much less to prepare for *Eternity*,  
and to do that in a few Moments, which ought to  
have been the care and endeavour of our whole  
Lives : That we may not be forced to huddle up  
an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant *Repentance* ;  
and to do that in great haste and confusion, which  
certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate  
Thoughts, and all the Consideration in the World.

And we should provide store of Oyl in our *Vessels*,  
wherewith to *supply* our *Lamps*, that they may *burn*  
*bright* to the last ; I mean, we should improve the  
*Grace* which we receive in *Baptism*, by abounding in  
the Fruits of the Spirit, and in all the substantial  
Virtues of a good Life ; that so *an entrance may be*  
*ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom*  
*of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

By this means, when we are called *to meet the*  
*Bridegroom*, we shall not be put to those miserable  
shifts which the *foolish Virgins* were driven to, of  
*begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl* ; which will all  
fail us, when we come to depend upon them : And  
though the dying man may make a hard shift to sup-  
port himself with these false Comforts for a little  
while, yet when the short delusion is over, which  
will be as soon as ever he is step'd into the other  
World, he will to his everlasting Confusion and  
Trouble find the Door of Heaven shut against him,

SERM. and that notwithstanding all his *vast Treasure of Pardons and Indulgences*, which have cost him so much, and are worth so little, he *shall never see the Kingdom of God*.

And *lastly*, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our *Lamps* by *quitting the Profession* of our *holy Religion* upon any temptation of Advantage, or for fear of any Loss or Suffering whatsoever. This *Occasion* will call for all our *Faith* and *Patience*, all our *Courage* and *Constancy*,

*Nunc animis opus, Ænea, nunc pectore firmo.*

When it comes to this *Trial*, we had need to *gird up the Loins of our Minds*, to summon all our Forces, and to *put on the whole armour of God*, that we may be able to *stand fast in an evil Day*, and when we have done all to stand, 1 Pet. 2. 15.

And now *my Brethren*, to use the words of St. Peter, *I testify unto you, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The Protestant reformed Religion*, which we in this Nation profess, is the very *Gospel of Christ*, the *true ancient Christianity*.

And, for God's sake, since in this *hour of Temptation*, when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree, as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testify our love to it, in the same way that our *Saviour* would have us shew our love to him, by *keeping his Commandments*.

I will conclude all with the *Apostle's Exhortation*, so very proper for this purpose, and to this present time, Phil. 1. 27. *Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead Lives suitable to the *Christian Religion*: And then, as it follows, *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel: And in nothing terrified by your adversaries,*



*versaries, which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*

*Now unto him that is able to establish you in the Gospel, and to keep you from falling; and to present you faultless before the presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy: To the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever. Amen.*

## SERMON XXXII.

A Thanksgiving Sermon for our Deliverance by the Prince of *ORANGE*.  
Preached at *Lincoln's-Inn* Chapel,  
*January 31. 1688.*

E Z R A ix. 13, 14.

*And after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespas; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a Deliverance as this:*

*Should we again break thy Commandments, and join in Affinity with the People of these Abominations; wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*

**I** Am sufficiently aware, that the particular Oc-SERM.  
casion of these Words is, in several Respects, XXXII.  
very different from the Occasion of this Day's Solemnity. For these Words were spoken by  
*Ezra*, at a Time appointed for Publick and Solemn  
Humilia-

SERM. Humiliation. But I shall not now consider them in  
 XXXII. that Relation, but rather as they refer to that Great  
 ~~~~~ Deliverance, which God had so lately wrought for  
 them ; and as they are a Caution to take heed of
 abusing great Mercies received from God ; and so
 they are very proper and pertinent to the great Oc-
 casion of this Day. Nay, these Words even in the
 saddest Aspect are not unsuitable to it. For we find
 in *Scripture*, upon the most solemn Occasions of Humi-
 liation, that good Men have always testified a thank-
 ful Sense of the Goodness of God to them. And indeed
 the Mercy of God doth then appear above measure
 merciful, when the Sinner is most deeply sensi-
 ble of his own Vileness and Unworthiness. And so
Ezra here in the depth of their Sorrow and Humilia-
 tion, hath so great a Sense of the Greatness of their
 Deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it ;
And hast given us such a Deliverance as this. And on
 the other hand, we find that good Men in their most
 solemn Praises and Thanksgivings, have made very
 serious Reflections upon their own Unworthiness.
 And surely the best way to make Men truly thank-
 ful, is first to make them very humble. When
David makes his most solemn Acknowledgments to
 God for his great Mercies to him, how doth he a-
 base himself before him : 1 *Chron.* 29. 4. *But who*
am I, and what is my People ? And so likewise after
 he had summoned all the Powers and Faculties of
 his Soul to join in the Praises of God, he interpo-
 seth this seasonable Meditation, *Psal.* 103. 10. *He*
hath not dealt with us after our Sins, nor rewarded ac-
cording to our Iniquities. The greater and more
 lively Sense we have of the Goodness of God to us,
 the more we shall abhor ourselves in Dust and Ashes ;
 nothing being more apt to melt us into Tears of Re-
 pentance, than the Consideration of great and un-
 deserved Mercies vouchsafed to us. *The Goodness of*
God doth naturally lead to Repentance.

Having

Having thus reconciled the *Text* to the present *SERM.*
Occasion, I shall for the more distinct handling of the *XXXII.*
Words take notice of these two *Parts* in them.

First, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and since God hath punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a Deliverance as this; should we again break his Commandments.

Secondly, here is a Sentence and Determination in the Case; *Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us*, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? This is not spoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of Question; but is the more vehemently positive, the more peremptorily affirmative; as if he had said, it cannot otherwise be in reason expected, but after such repeated Provocations, God should be angry with us till he had consumed us.

I. *First*, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and for our great Trespas; and since God hath punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a Deliverance as this: Should we again break his Commandments, and join in affinity with the People of these Abominations. In which *Words* these following Propositions seem to be involv'd, which I shall but just mention, and pass to the *Second Part* of the *Text*.

1. That Sin is the Cause of all our Sufferings; *after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds*, and for our great Trespas. Our evil Deeds bring all other Evils upon us.

2. That great Sins have usually a proportionable Punishment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatness of our Punishment; *for our evil Deeds*, and for our great Trespas, there is the greatness of our Sin. But when I say that great Sins have a proportionable Punishment, I do not mean that any Temporal Punishments are proportionable to the great Evil of Sin; but that God doth usually observe a proportion in the Temporal Punishments of Sin; so
 that

SERM. that although no Temporal Punishment be proportionable to Sin, yet the Temporal Punishments
 XXXII. of one Sin holds a proportion to the Punishment of another, and consequently, lesser and greater Sins, have proportionably a lesser and greater Punishment.

3. That all the Punishments which God inflict in this Life do fall short of the demerit of our Sins; *and seeing that thou our God hast punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve.* In the Hebrew it is, *and hast kept down our Iniquities*, that is, that they should not rise up against us. The LXX expresseth it very emphatically, *thou hast eased us of our Sins*, that is, thou hast not let the whole Weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the restraints which God puts upon his Anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the Sinner would not be able to bear it, but must sink under it. Indeed it is only said in the *Text*, that the Punishment which God inflicted upon the *Jews*, though it was a long Captivity, was beneath the desert of their Sins: But yet it is universally true, and *Ezra* perhaps might intend to insinuate so much, that all Temporal Punishments, though never so severe, are always less than our Iniquities deserve.

3. That God many times works very great Deliverances for those who are very unworthy of them; *and hast given us such a Deliverance as this*, notwithstanding our *Evil Deeds*, and notwithstanding our great *Trespasses*.

5. That we are but too apt, even after great Judgments, and after great Mercies, to relapse into our former Sins; *should we again break thy Commandments.* *Ezra* insinuates that there was great reason to fear this, especially considering the strange temper of that People, who when God multiply'd his Blessings upon them, were so apt to *wax fat and kick against him*; and though he had cast them several Times into the Furnace of Affliction, though they were melted for the present, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That

6. That it is good to take notice of those parti-
 ular Sins which have brought the Judgments of
 God upon us. So Ezra does here; *after all that is
 come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Tres-
 passes; and should we again join in Affinity with the
 people of these Abominations.*

Secondly, Here is a Sentence and Determination in
 the Case; *wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou
 hadst consumed us, so that there should be no Remnant nor
 escaping?* Which Question, as I said before, doth
 imply a strong and peremptory Affirmative; as if
 he had said, after such a provocation there is great
 reason to conclude, that God would be angry with
 us till he had consumed us.

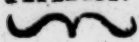
From whence the *Observation* contained in this
 part of the *Text* will be this, *That it is a fearful Ag-
 gravation of Sin, and a sad Presage of Ruin to a Peo-
 ple, after great Judgments and great Deliverances, to
 return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again.*
 Hear how passionately Ezra expresses himself in this
 Case, *ver. 6. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to
 lift up mine Eyes to thee, my God.* Why? what was
 the Cause of this great Shame and Confusion of Face?
 He tells us, *ver. 9. for we were Bondmen, yet our
 God hath not forsaken us in our Bondage, but hath ex-
 tended his Mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to set up
 the House of our God, and to repair the Desolations
 thereof, and to give us a Wall in Judah and in Jerusa-
 lem;* that is, to restore to them the free and safe Ex-
 ercise of their Religion. Here was great Mercy
 and a mighty Deliverance indeed; and yet after this
 they presently relapsed into a very great Sin, *ver. 10.*
*And now, O our God, what shall we say after this?
 for we have forsaken thy Commandments.*

In the handling of this *Observation*, I shall do
 these two things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, That this is a
 very heavy Aggravation of Sin; and

Secondly,

SERM. Secondly, That it is a fatal Prefage of Ruin to a
XXXII. People.



First, It is a heavy Aggravation of Sin after great Judgments, and after signal Mercies and Deliverances, to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. Here are *three* Things to be distinctly spoken to.

1. That it is a great Aggravation of Sin to return to it after great Judgments.

2. To do this after great Mercies and Deliverances.

3. After both to return to the same Sins again.

1. It is a great Aggravation of Sin, after great Judgments have been upon us, to return to an evil Course. Because this is an Argument of great Obstinacy in evil. The longer *Pharaoh* resisted the Judgments of God, the more was his wicked Heart hardened, till at last he arrived at a monstrous Degree of Hardness; having been, as the *Text* tells us, hardened under *ten Plagues*. And we find that after God had threaten'd the People of *Israel* with several Judgments, he tells them, *Lev. 26. 13.* that if they *will not be reformed by all these Things, he will punish them seven times more for their Sins*. And if the just God will in such a Case punish seven times more, we may conclude that the Sin is seven times greater.

What sad Complaints doth the *Prophet* make of the People of *Israel* growing worse for Judgments. *Ab! sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, Children that have been Corrupters, a Seed of evil doers, Isa. 1. 4.* He can hardly find Words enough to express how great Sinners they were; and he adds the Reason in the next *Verse*, *Why should they be smitten any more! they will revolt more and more,* ver. 5. They were but the worse for Judgment. This renders them a *sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity*. And again, *Isa. 9. 13.* *This People turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the*

Lord

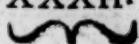
Lord of Hosts; therefore his Anger is not turned away, SERM.
 but his Hand is stretched out still. And Isa. 26. 11. XXXII.
 the same Prophet further complains to the same Purpose, *When thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see.*
 There is a particular Brand set upon King Abaz, because Affliction made him worse: 2 Chron. 28. 22.
This is that King Abaz, that is, that grievous and notorious Sinner: And what was it that rendered him so? in the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord: This is that King Abaz, who is said to have provoked the Lord above all the Kings of Israel which were before him.

2. It is likewise a fore Aggravation of Sin, when it is committed after great Mercies and Deliverances vouchsafed to us. Because this is an Argument of great Ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy Charge upon the People of Israel, that they remembred not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the Hand of all their Enemies on every side; neither shewed they Kindness to the House of Jerubaal, namely Gideon, who had been their Deliverer, according to all the Goodness which he had shewed to Israel. Judg. 8. 34, 35. God, we see, takes it very ill at our Hands, when we are ungrateful to the Instruments of our Deliverance; but much more, when we are unthankful to Him the Author of it. And how severely doth Nathan the Prophet reproach David upon this Account? Thus said the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee King over Israel, and delivered thee out of the Hand of Saul, &c. And if this had been too little, I would moreover have done such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the Commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? God here reckons up his manifold Mercies and Deliverances, and aggravates David's Sin upon this Account. And he was very angry likewise with Solomon for the same reason, because he had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 1 Kings 11. 9. However we may slight the Mercies of God, he keeps

SERM. keeps a punctual and strict Account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great Blot upon *Hezekiah*, that *he returned not again according unto the Benefits done unto him*, 2 Chron, 32. 25. God takes very severe Notice of all the unkind and unworthy Returns that are made to Him for his Goodness.

Ingratitude to God is so unnatural and monstrous, that we find Him appealing against us for it to the inanimate Creatures. *Isai. 1. 2. Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me.* And then he goes on and upbraids them with the brute Creatures, as being more grateful to Men, than Men are to God. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider*, verse 3. And in the same Prophet there is the like complaint: *Isa. 26. 10. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the Land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.* They that will not acknowledge the Mercies of God's Providence, shall feel the Strokes of his Justice.

There is no greater Evidence in the World of an intractable Disposition, than not to be wrought upon by Kindness, not to be melted by Mercies, not to be obliged by Benefits, not to be tamed by gentle Usage. Nay, God expects that his Mercies should lay so great an Obligation upon us, that even a Miracle should not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there arise among you a Prophet, (says Moses to the People of Israel, Deut. 13. 1, 2.) or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder cometh to pass, whereof he speak to thee, saying, let us go after other Gods and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that prophet.* And he gives the Reason, *vers. 5. because he hath spoken to turn you away*

away from the Lord God of Israel, which brought you SERM.
out of the Land of Egypt, and delivered you out of the XXXII.
house of bondage. 

3. It is a greater Aggravation yet, after great Mercies and Judgments to return to the same Sins. Because this can hardly be without our sinning against Knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the Sin is which we are guilty of, and have been so sorely punish'd for before. This is an Argument of a very perverse and incorrigible Temper, and that which made the Sin of the People of *Israel* so above measure sinful, that after so many signal Deliverances, and so many terrible Judgments, they fell into the same Sin of *murmuring ten times; murmuring* against God the *Author*, and against *Moses* the glorious *Instrument* of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*: which was one of the *two great Types* of the *Old Testament*, both of *temporal* and *spiritual Oppression* and *Tyranny*. Hear with what *Resentment* God speaks of the ill Returns which they made to him for that great Mercy and Deliverance. *Because all these men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not bearkened unto my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their Fathers.* And after he had brought them into the promised Land, and wrought great Deliverances for them several times, how does he upbraid them with their Proneness to fall again into the same Sin of Idolatry? *Judge. 10. 11, 12, 13, 14. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites; from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistians? The Zidonians also and the Amalekites and Maonites did oppress you; and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their hand: yet you have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.*

SERM. tribulation. This incensed God so highly against
 XXXII. them, that they still relapsed into the same Sin of
 Idolatry, and after so many Afflictions and so many
 Deliverances. Upon such an Occasion well might
 the Prophet say, *Jer. 2. 19. Thine own wickedness
 shall correct thee, and thy Sins shall reprove thee: know
 therefore that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou
 hast forsaken the Lord thy God.* It is hardly possible
 but we should know that the Wickedness for which
 we have been so severely corrected is an evil and bit-
 ter thing.

Thus much for the *first part of the Observation*,
 namely, that it is a fearful Aggravation of Sin, after
 great Judgments and great deliverances, to return
 to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. I pro-
 ceed to the

Second Part, namely, that this is a fatal Presage
 of Ruin to a People; *should we again break thy Com-
 mandments, and join in Affinity with the People of these
 Abominations; wouldst thou not be angry with us till
 thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no rem-
 nant nor escaping:* And so God threatens the People
 of Israel in the Text which I cited before, *wherefore I
 will deliver you no more, Judg. 10. 13. Wherefore*
 that is, because they would neither be reform'd by
 the Afflictions wherewith God had exercised them,
 nor by the many wonderful Deliverances which he
 had wrought for them.

And there is great reason, why God should deal
 thus with a People that continues impenitent both
 under the Judgments and Mercies of God.

1. Because this doth ripen the Sins of a Nation
 and it is time for God to put in his Sickle when a
 People are ripe for ruin. When the Measure of
 their Sin is full, it is no wonder if the Cup of his In-
 dignation begin to overflow. It is said of the *Amo-
 rites*, four hundred years before God brought that
 fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extir-
 pation of them, because *Gen. 15. 16. the Iniquity*

the Amorites was not yet full. When neither the SERM. Mercies nor the Judgments of God will bring us to **X XXII.** Repentance, we are then fit for Destruction; according to that of the Apostle, *Rom. 9. 22. What if God willing to shew his Wrath, and make his Power known, endured with much long-suffering the Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction?* They who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of God's Mercies, nor by the patience of his Judgments, seem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for Destruction.

2. Because this incorrigible Temper shews the Case of such Persons to be desperate and incurable, *Isa. 1. 5. Why should they be smitten any more?* says God of the People of *Israc'*, *they will revolt more and more.* *Matth. 23. 37, 38. How often would I have gathered you,* says our Blessed Saviour to the *Jews,* *even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! Behold, your House is left to you desolate,* that is, ye shall be utterly destroyed; as it happen'd forty years after to *Jerusalem,* and to the whole *Jewish Nation.*

When God sees that all the means which he can use do prove ineffectual, and to no purpose, he will then give over a People, as Physicians do their Patients when they see that Nature is spent, and their Case past remedy. When Men will not be the better for the best means that Heaven can use, God will then leave them to reap the Fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their Sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to our selves, and to the solemn *Occasion* of this *Day.*

And if this be our *Case,* let us take heed that this be not also our *Doom* and *Sentence.*

First, The *Case* in the *Text* doth very much resemble *Ours.* And that in *three* Respects. God hath sent great Judgments upon us *for our evil Deeds,* and *for our great Trespasses:* He hath *punish'd us less than our Iniquities have deserved;* and hath given us a very great and wonderful *Deliverance.*

SERM.

XXXII. I. God hath inflicted great Judgments upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespases. Great Judgments, both for the quality and for the continuance of them. It shall suffice only to mention those which are of a more ancient Date. Scarce hath any Nation been more calamitous than this of Ours, both in respect of the Invasions and Conquests of Foreigners, and of our own Civil and Intestine Divisions. Four times we have been conquer'd; by the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans. And our intestine Divisions have likewise been great and of long continuance. Witness the Barons Wars, and that long and cruel Contest between the two Houses of York and Lancaster.

But to come nearer to our own Times, What fearful Judgments and Calamities of War, and Pestilence, and Fire, have many of us seen? and how close did they follow one another? What terrible havock did the Sword make amongst us for many Years? And this not the Sword of a Foreign Enemy, but of a Civil War; the mischiefs whereof were all terminated upon our selves, and have given deep Wounds, and left broad Scars upon the most considerable Families in the Nation.

— *Alta manent civilis vulnera dextrae.*

This War was drawn out to a great Length, and had a Tragical End, in the Murder of an excellent King; and in the Banishment of his Children into a strange Country, whereby they were exposed to the Arts and Practices of those of another Religion; the mischievous Consequences whereof we have ever since sadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this Day.

And when God was pleas'd in great Mercy at last to put an End to the miserable Distractions and Confusions of almost Twenty Years, by the happy Restoration of the Royal Family, and our Ancient Govern-

ment; which seem'd to promise to us a lasting Settlement, and all the Felicities we could wish, yet how soon was this bright and glorious Morning overcast, by the restless and black Designs of that sure and inveterate Enemy of ours, the Church of *Rome*, for the restoring of their Religion amongst us. And there was too much Encouragement given to this Design, by those who had Power in their Hands, and had brought Home with them a secret Good Will to it.

For this *great Trespass*, and for our many other Sins, God was angry with us, and sent among us the most raging Pestilence that ever was known in this Nation, which in the Space of *eight* or *nine* Months swept away near a third Part of the Inhabitants of this vast and populous *City*, and of the *Suburbs* thereof: besides a great many *Thousands* more in several Parts of the Nation. *But we did not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this.*

And therefore, the very next Year after, God sent a terrible and devouring *Fire*, which in less than *three* Days time laid the greatest Part of this great *City* in Ashes. And there is too much reason to believe that the *Enemy* did this; *that* perpetual and implacable *Enemy* of the Peace and Happiness of this Nation.

And even since the Time of that dreadful Calamity, which is now above *Twenty* Years ago, we have been in a continual Fear of the cruel Designs of that Party, which had hitherto been incessantly working under Ground, but now began to shew themselves more openly; and especially since a *Prince* of that Religion succeeded to the Crown, our Eyes have been ready to *fail us for Fear, and for looking after* those dreadful Things that were coming upon us, and seem'd to be even at the Door. A *Fear* which this Nation could easily have rid itself of, because they that caused it were but a Handful in Comparison of us, and could have done nothing without

SERM. without a foreign Force and Assistance ; had not the
 XXXII. Principles of Humanity, and of our Religion too,
 ~~~~~ restrain'd us from Violence and Cruelty, and from  
 every thing which had the Appearance of Undutiful-  
 ness to the Government which the Providence of  
 God had set over us. An Instance of the like Pa-  
 tience, under the like Provocations, for so long a  
 time, and after such visible and open Attempts up-  
 on them, when they had the Laws so plainly on their  
 side, I challenge any Nation or Church in the World,  
 from the very Foundation of it, to produce. In-  
 somuch, that if God had not put it into the Hearts  
 of our kind Neighbours, and of that incomparable  
*Prince*, who laid and conducted that great Design  
 with so much Skill and Secrecy, to have appear'd so  
 seasonably for our Rescue, our Patience had infalli-  
 bly, without a Miracle, been our Ruin. And I am  
 sure, if our *Enemies* had ever had the like Opportu-  
 nity in their Hands, and had over-ballanced us in  
 Numbers, but half so much as we did them, they  
 would never have let it slip ; but would long since  
 have extirpated us utterly, and have *made the Re-  
 membrance of us to have ceased among Men.*

And now if you ask me, For what Sins more es-  
 pecially God hath sent all these Judgments upon us?  
 It will not, I think, become us to be very particular  
 and positive in such Determinations. Thus much is  
 certain, That we have all sinned and contributed to  
 these Judgments; every one hath had some Hand, more  
 or less, in pulling down this Vengeance upon the Na-  
 tion. But we are all too apt to remove the meritori-  
 ous Cause of God's Judgments as far as we can from  
 ourselves, and our own Party, and upon any slight  
 Pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to instance in *one* or *two* things  
 which may probably enough have had a more parti-  
 cular and immediate Hand in drawing down the  
 Judgments of God upon us.

Our

Our horrible Contempt of Religion on the one SERM. Hand, by our *Infidelity* and *Prophaneness*; and our XXXII. shameful Abuse of it on the other, by our gross *Hypocrisy*, and sheltering great Wickedness and Immoralities under the Cloak and Profession of Religion.

And then great *Dissentions* and Divisions, great Uncharitableness and Bitterness of Spirit among those of the same Religion; so that almost from the Beginning of our happy Reformation the *Enemy* had sown these *Tares*, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of *Rome*, the Seeds of Dissention were scatter'd very early amongst us; and a fowre Humour had been fermenting in the Body of the Nation, both upon Account of *Religion* and *Civil* Interests, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.

And more particularly yet; That which is called the *great Trespass* here in the *Text*, their *joining in Affinity with the People of these Abominations*, by whom they had been detain'd in a long Captivity: This I say, seems to have had, both from the Nature of the Thing, and the just Judgment of God, no small Influence upon a great Part of the Miseries and Calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the Countenance which *Popery* had by the *Marriages* and *Alliances* of our *Princes*, for two or three Generations together with those of *that Religion*, it had not probably had a Continuance among us to this Day. Which will, I hope, now be a good Warning to those, who have the Authority to do it, to make effectual Provision by Law, for the Prevention of the like Inconvenience and Mischief in this Nation for ever.

Another *Parallel* between our Case and that in the *Text*, is, That *God hath punished us less than our Iniquities did deserve*. And this Acknowledgment we have as much Reason to make for ourselves, as *Ezra* had to do it in behalf of the *Jews*; *Thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve*. Thou,



SERM. our God, hast punished us; there is the Reason of so  
 XXXII. much Mercy and Mitigation. It is God, and not  
 ~~~~~ Man, with whom we have to do; and therefore it  
 is, that we *the Children of Men are not consumed*.
 And it is our God likewise, to whom we have a
 more peculiar Relation, and with whom, by Vir-
 tue of our Profession of Christianity, we are in Cove-
 nant: Thou our God hast punished us less than our
 Iniquities deserve. He might justly have pour'd forth
 all his Wrath, and have made his Jealousy to have
 smok'd against us, and have blotted out the Remem-
 brance of us from under Heaven: He might have gi-
 ven us up to the will of our Enemies, and into the
 Hands of those whose tender mercies are cruelty; He
 might have brought us into the Net which they had
 spread for us, and have laid a terrible Load of Af-
 fliction upon our Loins, and suffered insolent Men to
 ride over our Heads, and them that hated us with a
 perfect Hatred, to have had the Rule over us: But
 he was graciously pleas'd to remember Mercy in the
 midst of Judgment, and to repent himself for his Ser-
 vants, when he saw that their Power was gone, and
 things were come to that extremity, that we were
 in all human probability utterly unable to have
 wrought out our own Deliverance.

3. The last Parallel between our Case and that in
 the Text, is the great and wonderful Deliverance
 which God hath wrought for us. And whilst I am
 speaking of this, God is my Witness, whom I serve in
 the Gospel of his Son, that I do not say one word up-
 on this Occasion in flattery to Men, but in true
 thankfulness to Almighty God, and constrain'd
 thereto from a just Sense of his great Mercy to us all,
 in this marvellous Deliverance, in this mighty Salvation
 which he wrought for us. So that we may say with
 Ezra, Since thou our God hast given us such a Delive-
 rance as THIS: So great, that we know not how to
 compare it with any thing but it Self. God hath gi-
 ven us this Deliverance. And therefore Not unto us,
 O Lord,

O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the Praise. SERM. XXXII.
 For thou knowest, and we are conscious to ourselves, that we did in no wise deserve it; but quite the contrary. God hath given it, and it ought to be so much the welcomer to us, for coming from such a Hand, *It is the Lord's doing*, and therefore ought to be the more *marvellous in our Eyes*. It is a Deliverance full of *Mercy*, and I had almost said, full of *Miracle*, *The Finger of God* was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate divine Interposition. And if we will not *wisely consider the Lord's doing*, we have reason to stand in awe of that Threatning of *His*, *Psal. 28. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.*

It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The *Greatness* of it; the *Strangeness* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenness* and *Easiness* of it.

The *Greatness* of it; it was a great Deliverance, from the greatest Fears, and from the greatest Dangers; the apparent and imminent Danger of the saddest *Thralldom* and *Bondage*, *Civil* and *Spiritual*, both of *Soul* and *Body*.

And it was brought about in a very *extraordinary* manner, and by very *strange* means: Whether we consider the *greatness* and *difficulty* of the Enterprize, or the closeness and *secrecy* of the Design, which must of necessity be communicated at least to the *Chief* of those who were to assist and engage in it: Especially the *States* of the *United Provinces*, who were then in so much danger themselves, and wanted more than their own forces for their own Defence and Security: A kindness never to be forgotten by the *English* Nation. And besides all this, the Difficulties and Disappointments which happen'd, after the Design was open and manifest, from the uncertainties of *Wind* and *Weather*, and many other *Accidents*

SERM. *cidents* impossible to be foreseen and prevented. And
 XXXII. yet in Conclusion a strange concurrence of all things
 on all sides, to bring the thing which the Providence
 of God intended to a happy Issue and Effect.

And we must not here forget the many *Worthies* of
 our *Nation*, who did so generously run all hazards of
 Life and Fortune, for the preservation of our *Reli-*
gion, and the asserting of our ancient *Laws* and *Li-*
berties.

These are all strange and unusual means; but
 which is stranger yet, the very Counsels and Me-
 thods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all
 this, and perhaps more effectually, than any Coun-
 sel and Contrivance of our own could have done it.
 For even the *Jesuits*, those formal *Politicians* by
Book and *Rule*, without any consideration or true
 knowledge of the Temper, and Interest, and other
 Circumstances of the People they were designing
 upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without
 any care to know them: I say, the *Jesuits*, who for
 so long a time, and for so little Reason, have effec-
 ted the Reputation of the deepest and craftiest
States-men in the World, have upon this great Occa-
 sion, and when their whole *Kingdom of Darknes* lay
 at stake, by a more than ordinary *infatuation* and
blindness, so out-witted and over reach'd themselves
 in their own Counsels, that they have really contri-
 buted as much, or more, to our Deliverance from
 the Destruction which they had designed to bring
 upon us, than all our wisest and best Friends could
 have done.

And then, if we consider further, how *sudden*
 and surprizing it was, so that we could hardly be-
 lieve it when it was accomplish'd: And like the
Children of Israel, when the Lord turned again the
Captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.
 When all things were driving on furiously, and in
 great haste, then God gave an unexpected check to
 the

the Designs of Men, and stopp'd them in their full SERM.
Career. Who among us could have imagin'd but a XXXII.
 few Months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of
 our Fears and Troubles? God hath at once
 scatter'd all our Fears, and out-done all our hopes
 by the greatness and suddenness of our Deliverance.
O that men would praise the Lord for his
goodness, and for his wonderful works to the Children
of men.

And *lastly*, If we consider the cheapness and easiness of this Deliverance. All this was done without a *Battel*, and almost without *Blood*. All the danger is, lest we should loath it, and grow sick of it, because it was so very easy. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a *Red Sea* of Blood, we would have valued it more. But this surely is great wantonness, and whatever we think of it, one of the highest provocations imaginable: For there can hardly be a fouler and blacker Ingratitude towards Almighty God, than to slight so great a Deliverance, only because it came to us so easily, and hath cost us so very cheap.

I will mention but one Circumstance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our observation. That God seems in this last Deliverance, in some sort to have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this *Nation* against all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our *Reformation*. Our wonderful Deliverance from the formidable *Spanish Invasion* design'd against us, happen'd in the Year 1588. And now just a hundred Years after God was pleas'd to bring about this *last* great and most happy Deliverance. That horrid *Gunpowder Conspiracy*, without *Precedent*, and without *Parallel*, was design'd to have been executed upon the *Fifth Day of November*; the same Day upon which his *Higness* the *Prince of Orange* landed the *Forces* here in *England*, which he brought
 hither

SERM. hither for our Rescue. So that this is a Day every
 XXXII. way worthy to be solemnly set apart and joyfully celebrated by this Church and Nation, throughout all Generations; as the fittest of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great Deliverances which God hath wrought for us, from Popery, and its inseparable Companion, Arbitrary Power. And we may then say with the Holy Psalmist, Psal. 118. 23, 24. *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Secondly, As the Case in the Text is much like Ours, to let us take heed that the Doom and Sentence there, be not so too. If after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespas, and since God hath punish'd us less than our Iniquities did deserve; should we again break his Commandments, and join in affinity with the People of these Abominations, would He not be angry with us till he had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? What could we in reason expect after all this, but utter ruin and destruction: We may here apply, as St. Paul does God's dealing with the People of Israel, to the Times of the Gospel; for he speaks of it as an Example and Admonition to all Ages to the end of the World. Now these things says the Apostle, 1 Cor. 16. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. *were our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them, &c. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents.* For the explication of this passage we must have recourse to the History, which gives this account of it. Numb. 2. 5, 6. *And the People spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the Wilderness? &c. impeaching God and his Servant Moses, as if by this*
 Delive-

Deliverance they had put them into a much worse **SERM.**
 condition than they were in when they were in *Egypt*. **XXXII.**
And the Lord sent fiery Serpents among the People,
and they bit the People, and much People of Israel
died. But how was this a tempting of Christ? Neither
 let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, that
 is, let not us, now under the Gospel, tempt our Sa-
 viour and Deliverer, as the Israelites did theirs, by
 slighting that great Deliverance, and by speaking
 against God, and against Moses. Neither murmur ye,
 as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of
 the Destroyer. And how far this may concern Us,
 and all others, to the end of the World, who shall
 tempt Christ, the great Patron and Deliverer of his
 Church, and murmur without cause, as the Israelites
 did, at the Deliverance which he works for them,
 and against the Instruments of it, the Apostle tells us
 in the next Words: *ver. 11. Now all these things*
happened unto them for Ensamples, or Types; and
they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends
of the World are come. Let us not tempt Christ, who
 is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his
 Church from the Tyranny of Antichrist.

To draw now towards a Conclusion; I will com-
 prehend my Advice to you upon the whole matter,
 in as few words as I can.

Let us use this great Deliverance which God hath
 given us [*such a Deliverance as this*] from our Ene-
 mies, and from the Hand of all that hate us; not by
 using Them as they would have done Us, had we
 fallen under their Power, with great Insolence, and
 Rage, and Cruelty; but with great Moderation and
 Clemency, making as few Examples of Severity
 as will be consistent with our future Security from
 the like Attempts upon our Religion and Laws:
 And even in the Execution of Justice upon the
 greatest Offenders, let us not give so much counte-
 nance to the ill Examples which have been set of
extravagant Fines and Punishments, as to imitate
 those

SERM. those Patterns which with so much reason we ab-
 XXXII. hor; no, not in the Punishments of the *Authors* of
 them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be so wise, as not to forfeit the Fruits of this *Deliverance*, and to hinder ourselves of the Benefit and Advantage of it, by Breaches and Divisions among ourselves. As we have no reason to desire it, so I think we can hardly ever hope to understand *Popery* better, and the cruel Designs of it, than we do already, both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this Nation, and likewise from that dismal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in *One* of our Neighbour *Nations*, which hath long pretended to the Profession of the most refin'd and *moderate Popery* in the World; but hath now at last shewed itself in its true Colours, and in the perfection of a persecuting Spirit; and have therein given us a most sad and deplorable *Instance*, of a *Religion* corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be possible, is worse than *None*.

And since, by the undeserved Mercy of God to us, we have upon such easy terms in comparison, escap'd their Rage and Fury; let us now at length resolve, never to join in Affinity with the *People of these Abominations*; since our *Alliances* with them by Marriage have had so fatal an Influence, both upon the *publick* Peace and Tranquility of the *Nation*, and upon the Welfare also of *private Families*. I have known many Instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw *One* that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those *Protestant Families* in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful *Matches* have been made: Not that such *Marriages* are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent Danger and Temptation to which those of our *Church* and *Religion* that enter into them do evidently expose themselves,

elves, of being seduc'd from their Religion ; not SERM.
by the good Arguments which the other can offer to XXXII.
that purpose, but by the ill Arts which they have
the confidence and the conscience to make use of in
the making of *Profelytes*.

And let us pay our most hearty and thankful Acknowledgments, chiefly, and in the first Place to *Almighty God*, the Blessed *Author* of this *Deliverance*, and under *Him*, to that happy *Instrument*, whom God hath been pleased, in great pity to this sinful and unworthy *Nation*, to raise up on purpose for it, his Highness the Prince of *Orange* ; and to that end did in his All-wise Providence lay the Foundation of our then future *Deliverance*, in that *auspicious Match* which was concluded here in *England*, about eleven years ago, between this renowned *Prince* and our excellent *Princess*.

This is that most illustrious House of *Nassau* and *Orange*, which God hath so highly honoured *above all the Families* of the Earth, to give a Check to the *Two* great aspiring *Monarchies* of the *West*, and bold *Attempters* upon the *Liberties* of *Europe* : To the *One* in the last Age ; and to the *Other*, in the present. As if the *Princes* of this Valiant and Victorious *Line* had been of the *Race* of *Hercules*, born to rescue Mankind from Oppression, and to quell Monsters.

And *lastly*, Let us beseech Almighty God, all whose Ways and Works are perfect, That he would *establish that which he hath wrought*, and still carry it on to further and greater perfection. Which after such an *Earnest* of his Favour and good Will to us, we have no reason to doubt but that he is ready to do for us ; if by our own *fickleness* and *inconstancy*, disgusting the *Deliverance* now it is come, which we so earnestly desired before it came ; if by our ungrateful *Murmurings* and *Discontents*, by our own foolish *Heats* and *Animosities*, kindled and carried on by the ill Designs of some, working upon the
tender-

SERM. tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious
 XXXII. pretences of *Conscience* and *Loyalty*: I say, if by some
 or all these ways we do not refuse the Blessing which
 God now offers, and defeat and frustrate the merciful
 Design of this wonderful Revolution; God will
 still rejoice over us, to do us good, and think thoughts
 of Peace towards us, thoughts of good, and not of evil,
 to give us an expected end of our long Troubles and
 Confusions.

But if we will not know in this our day, the things
 which belong to our Peace, our Destruction will then
 be of ourselves; and there will be no need that God
 should be angry with us, for we shall be undone by
 our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way
 and Means of our being saved; and so be angry with
 one another till we be consumed. Which God of his
 infinite Goodness, give us all the Grace and Wisdom
 to prevent; for his Mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ*,
 to whom with Thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost,
 be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise,
 both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXXIII.

Of Forgiveness of Injuries, and against
Revenge.

*Preached before the QUEEN at White-
hall, March 8. 1688-9.*

MATTH. V. 44.

*But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless
them that curse you, do good to them that hate
you, pray for them that despitefully use you,
and persecute you.*

THE Gospel hath promised Forgiveness of SERM.
XXXIII.
Sins to us upon *two* Conditions ; That we
sincerely repent of the Sins which we have
committed against God ; and, that we
heartily forgive to Men the Injuries and Offences
which they have been guilty of towards us.

I shall at this time by God's Assistance treat of the
latter of these, from the *Words* which I have recited
to you ; which are part of our *Saviour's* excellent
Sermon upon the Mount. In which he doth not only
explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Na-
tural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions*
of greater perfection than either the Law of *Moses*
or the *Natural Law*, in their largest extent, did
contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce* except only in
the Case of *Adultery* ; and likewise *Revenge* ; none of
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SERM. which were either forbidden by the *Law* of *Nature*,
 XXXIII. or by the *Law* which was given by *Moses*.

And to the *Prohibitions* our *Blessed Saviour* adds several new *Precepts* of greater Perfection than any *Laws* that were extant before. *But I say unto you love your Enemies.* The *Jewish* Law commanded them to love their *Neighbours*, meaning their Brethren and those of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us to love our *Enemies*, hath in the most emphatical manner that can be, commanded us to love all Men. For if any were to be excluded from our Charity, none so likely to be so as our Enemies. So that after a Command to love our Enemies it was needless to name any others, because men are naturally apt to love those that love them.

I say unto you, love your enemies; here the inward Affection is required. *Bless them that curse you*; here outward Civility and Affability are required, in Opposition to rude and uncivil Language; for so *Blessing* and *Cursing* do in *Scripture* frequently signify. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* These are the highest Expressions of Enmity that can be, *Calumny* and *Cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these two tenderest Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to secure the Sincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to express it by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I say, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to dissemble; and from whom we can expect no Mercy for our selves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of him for others.

You see what is the Duty here required; That we bear a sincere Affection to our most malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon Occasion to give real Testimony of it.

And

And because this may seem a hard Duty, and not SER.M. so easy to be reconciled either to our Inclination or XXXIII. our Reason; I shall endeavour to shew, that this Law is not only reasonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the Practice of it more easy and delightful, and upon all Accounts much more for our Benefit and Advantage, than the contrary. And that upon *four* Considerations; which I shall endeavour to represent with their just Advantage, and so as may, I hope, not only convince our Judgment of the Reasonableness of this precept, but likewise bend and sway our Wills to the Obedience and Practice of it.

I. If we consider the Nature of the *Aff* here required, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a mere Passion, but under the Government of our Reason, is the most natural and easy, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in human Nature: Whereas *Ill-Will* and *Hatred*, and *Revenge*, are very troublesome and vexatious Passions. Both the devising of Mischief, and the Accomplishment of it, and the Reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneasy; and the Consequences of it many times pernicious to our selves. The very design of Revenge is troublesome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural Fermentation and Tumult. The Man that meditates it is always restless; his very Soul is stung, swells and boils, is in Pain and Anguish, hath no Ease, no Enjoyment of it self, so long as this Passion reigns. The Execution of it may perhaps be attended with some present Pleasure, but that Pleasure is unreasonable and brutish, momentary and short, like a flash of Lightning, which vanisheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly said that Revenge is sweet, but to a calm and considerate Mind, Patience and Forgiveness are sweeter, and do afford a much more rational and solid and durable Pleasure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodness are far a
T 2,
more

SERM. more pleasing and delightful Spectacle, than our
 XXXIII. Rage and Cruelty. And no sort of Thought does
 usually haunt Men with more Terror, than the Re-
 flection upon what they have done in way of Re-
 venge.

Besides that the consequences of this Passion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our selves. For the Revenge of one Injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the same Reason to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endless Circulation of Injuries and Revenges. So that whoever seeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the Issue take it upon himself, and whilst he thinks to transfer the Injury which he hath received from him that did it, he doubles it upon himself.

Such and so great are the Troubles and Inconveniencies of a malicious and revengeful Temper; but *there is no Torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently says. To be kindly affectioned towards all, to bear no Grudge or Ill-will, no Thought of Displeasure or Revenge towards any Man, is the easiest Posture, the most pleasant State of the Mind. So that if not for their sakes, yet for our own we should *love our Enemies, and do good to them that hate us*; because to be thus affected towards all Men, is as great a Kindness to our selves, as it is Charity to others.

II. If we consider the Qualification of the *Object*; it is *our Enemy* whom we are required to love. In whom though there be something that is justly disgusting, yet there is something also that is lovely; and if we persist in our Kindness to him, notwithstanding his Enmity to us, the Enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a sincere and firm Friendship.

'Tis true indeed, that with Regard to our selves personal Enmity towards us is one of the most inconvenient Qualities that a Man can have, but not there-
 fore

fore the worst in it self. If we could be impartial SERM.
and lay aside Prejudice, we might perhaps discern XXXIII.
several very lovely Qualities in him who hates us:
And Virtue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd,
even in an Enemy. And perhaps his Enmity towards
us is not so great and inexcusable a Fault, as we ap-
prehend; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that De-
gree, nor so altogether without Cause, as we ima-
gine; possibly we have provok'd him, or by his own
Mistake, or through the malicious Representation of
others he may be induced to think so: And are not we
our selves liable to the like Misapprehensions concern-
ing others? of which we are many times afterwards
convinc'd and asham'd; and so may he, and then
his Enmity will cease, if we will but have a little
Patience with him, as we always wish in the like case
that others would have with us.

At the worst, though never so fore and causeless
an Enemy, though never so bad a Man, yet he is a
Man, and as such, hath something in him which the
blindest Passion cannot deny to be good and amiable.
He hath the same Nature with our selves, which we
cannot hate or despise, without Hatred and Con-
tempt of our selves. Let a Man's Faults be what
they will, they do not destroy his Nature, and make
him cease to be a Man.

The *two* great Foundations of *Love* are *Relation*
and *Likeness*. *No one thing, says Tully, is so like, so*
equal to another, as one Man is to another. What Dif-
ference soever there may be between us and another
Man, yea, though he be our Enemy, yet he is still
like us in the main; and perhaps but too like us in
that for which we find so much fault with him, a
Proneness to offer Affronts and Injuries.

And there is an essential *Relation*, as well as *Like-*
ness, between one Man and another, which nothing
can ever dissolve, because it is founded in that which
no Man can divest himself of, in *Human Nature*. So

SERM. far is it from being true, which Mr. Hobbs asserts a
 XXXIII. the fundamental Principle of his Politicks, *That Men*
 are naturally in a State of War and Enmity with one another; that the contrary Principle, laid down by a much deeper and wiser Man, I mean Aristotle, is most certainly true, *That Men are naturally a-kin and Friends to each other.* Some unhappy Accidents and Occasions may make Men Enemies, but naturally every Man is a Friend to another: and that is the surest and most unalterable Reason of things which is founded in Nature, not that which springs from mutable Accidents and Occasions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the Notion of a Man, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an Enemy.

Consider farther that an Enemy, even whilst he is exercising his Enmity towards us, may do us many Acts of real Advantage; which though they do not proceed from Kindness, yet in Truth are Benefits. The malicious Censures of our Enemies, if we make a right Use of them, may prove of greater Advantage to us, than the Civilities of our best Friends. We can easily afford, nay the wisest of Men can hardly forbear, to love a Flatterer; to embrace him, and to take him into our Bosom; and yet an open Enemy is a thousand times better and less dangerous than he. It is good for many Men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy Occasion of reforming those Faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the Freedom, I had almost said, would have had the Friendship to have told them of.

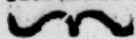
But what if after all, this Enemy of ours, this hated Man, prove to be one of our best Friends? For so reconciled Enemies usually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and kindness will. An obstinate Goodness is apt to conquer even the worst of Men. It is hardly in the Nature of Man to withstand the Kindness of one whom, by all that we could

could do, we have not been able to make our Ene-^{SERM.}
my. After a Man hath done the greatest Injury ^{XXXIII.}
to another, not only to find no Revenge following
upon it, but the first Opportunity taken to oblige
him, is so very surprizing, that it can hardly fail to
gain upon the worst Disposition, and to melt down
the hardest Temper. So that we should love our E-
nemies, if not for what they are at present, yet for
what they may be, and in hope that by these Means
they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we consider the Excellency and Generosi-
ty of the thing it self. *To love our Enemies, and to do
good to them that hate us*, is the Perfection of Goodness,
and the Advancement of it to its highest Pitch. It
is the most excellent and perfect Act of the greatest
and most perfect of all Graces and Virtues, I mean,
Charity; which by St. Paul is call'd the *Bond of per-
fection*; and by St. James, *the perfect and the Royal
Law*; because it inspires Men with a greatness of Mind
fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more
admirable than a generous Goodness and Clemency,
even towards great Enemies and Offenders, so as is
consistent with the publick Good. Love for Love
is but Justice and Gratitude; Love for no Love is
Favour and Kindness; but Love for Hatred and
Enmity is a most divine Temper, a steady and immu-
table Goodness that is not to be stirred by provocati-
on, and so far from being conquer'd, that it is rather
confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and En-
mity do not extinguish Love, what can? This is
Goodness indeed; not only without Merit and Ob-
ligation, without Invitation or Motive; but against
all reasonable Expectation, and in despite of all
Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return Good for Evil and Love for
Hatred, is one of the greatest Arguments of a great
Mind, and of deep Wisdom and Consideration: For
naturally our *first* Inclinations and Thoughts towards
our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but

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XXXIII.



our *second* and wiser Thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveness is much more generous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another Man than this, that when the Injury began on his part, the Kindness should begin on ours. If both the Ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more desirable Conquest to *overcome evil with good*, than with *evil*. By *this*, we can only conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the *other*, we certainly conquer our selves and perhaps our Enemy too; overcoming him in the noblest manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually subduing him to be our Friend. This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wise *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meer dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wise Delay; without ever striking a Stroke, or shedding one drop of Blood, to vanquish an Enemy, and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battle.

*Dr. Barrow.

Revenge is blind and rash, and does always proceed from Impotency and Weakness of Mind. 'Tis Anger that spurs Men on to it; and Anger is certainly one of the foolishlest Passions of human Nature, and which commonly betrays Men to the most imprudent and unreasonable things. So *Solomon* observes, *Prov. 14. 29. He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly*: and again, *Eccles. 7. 9. Anger resteth in the bosom of fools*: But to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of great Wisdom; and to forgive it, of a great Mind: So the same *Wise-man* tells us, *Prov. 16. 32. He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*. It is a greater thing, in case of great provocation, to calm a Man's own Spirit than to storm and take a strong City.

Whereas the angry Man loseth and lets fall the government of himself, and lays the Reins upon the Neck

Neck of the *wild beast*, his own brutish Appetite and SERM.
 Passion; which hurries him on first to Revenge, and XXXIII.
 then to Repentance for the Folly which he hath been
 guilty of in gratifying so unreasonable a Passion.
 For it very seldom happens that any Man executes an
 Act of Revenge, but the very next Moment after he
 hath done it, he is sorry for it, and wisheth he had
 not done it. Whereas Patience and Forgiveness do
 wisely prevent both the Mischief to others, and the
 Trouble to our selves, which is usually consequent up-
 on Revenge.

IV. If we consider the Perfection and Prevalency
 of the *Examples* which the *Gospel* proposeth to us, to
 allure and engage us to the Practice of this Duty.
 And they are the *Examples* of God himself, and of
 the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

I. The Example of *God* himself. The *Scripture*
 doth frequently set before us the Goodness of God's
 common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern.
 And this is the Argument whereby our blessed Savi-
 our presseth the Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verse*
 immediately after it; *That ye may be the children*
of your heavenly father, who maketh his sun to rise
on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall on the
just and the unjust. The same Argument *Seneca* al-
 so urgeth to the same purpose. *How many* (says he)
are unworthy of the light, and yet the day visits them?
 And speaking of the Gods, *They bestow* (says he) *their*
benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those
who make a bad construction and use of their kindness.
 And almost in the very Words of our Saviour, *Eti-*
am sceleratis sol oritur, &c. *The sun riseth even up-*
on the most vile and profligate persons, and the seas are
open to pirates.

Thus is God affected towards those who are guilty
 of the greatest Provocations towards Him. He bestows
 upon them the Gifts of his common Providence;
 and not only so, but is ready to forgive innumerable
 Offences to them for *Christ's* sake. This Pattern
 the

SERM. the *Apostle* proposeth to our imitation, *Ephes. 4. 32.*
 XXXIII. *Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you: ch. 5. 1. Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear Children.* This Temper and Disposition of Mind, is the prime Excellency and Perfection of the divine Nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of Beings? And so our *blessed Saviour* concludes this Argument, in the last Verse of this Chapter, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your father which is in Heaven is perfect*; which *St. Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your father which is in Heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing which we think to be so very hard and difficult, you see that we have perfection itself for our Pattern. And this *Example* ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reason there is, why we should do thus to one another, than why *God* should do thus to us. Our Offences against *God* are more and greater, than any Man ever was or could be guilty towards us: Besides, that there are many Considerations which ought to tie up our hands, and may reasonably restrain us from falling furiously upon one another, which can have no place at all in *God*. We may justly fear that the consequence of our Revenge may return upon our selves, and that it may come to be our own case to stand in need of Mercy and Forgiveness from others: And therefore out of necessary caution and prudence, we should take heed not to set any bad example in this kind, lest it should recoil upon our selves. We who stand so much in need of Forgiveness our selves ought in all reason to be very easy to forgive others. But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real Injury or Suffering. *God* can never stand in need of Pity or Forgiveness; and yet of his own meer Goodness, without any interest or de-

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gn, how slow is he to anger, and how ready to SERM.
forgive? XXXIII.

And which comes yet nearer to us, there is also the Example of the Son of God, our blessed Saviour; who in our Nature, and in case of the greatest Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practice this Virtue to the height: And all this for our sakes, as well as for our Example. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himself submitted to with the greatest patience and constancy of Mind, in our stead, and wholly for our advantage.

He rendered good for evil to all Mankind, and shew'd greater Love to us whilst we were Enemies to Him, than ever any Man did to his Friend.

He pray'd for those that despitefully used him and persecuted him. And this, not upon cool consideration, after the Injury was done, and the Pains of his sufferings was over; but whilst the Sense and Smart of them was upon him, and in the very Agony and Bitterness of Death: In the height of all his Anguish, he poured out his Soul an Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they shed it; pleading with God, in behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuse that was possible to be made for their Malice, that is, their Ignorance; and spending his last Breath in that most charitable Prayer for them, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

The last Declaration which he made of his mind, was Love to his Enemies; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd was an earnest Request to God for the Forgiveness of his Persecutors and Murderers.

So that if any Example ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our blessed Saviour should; since the Injuries which he suffer'd have saved us from suffering, and

SERM. and the greatest *Blessing* and *Happiness* that ever be-
 XXXIII. fel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example*

And then with what confidence, nay, with what conscience, can we pretend to share in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Virtues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive Kindness and Charity of the Son of God to the sinful Sons of Men, after all our bitterest Enmity towards him, and most cruel and injurious Usage of him; and all this Charity exercised towards us whilst he was under the actual sense and suffering of these things: and yet not be provok'd by an Example so admirable in itself, and of such mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewise*?

But notwithstanding the Power of these Arguments to persuade to this Duty, I must not dissemble some Objections which are, I believe, in many of your minds against it; and to which, for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give some satisfaction. And they are these:

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does not seem so well to agree with another of our *Blessed Saviour* in another *Evangelist*, Luke 17. 3, 4. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Here our *Blessed Saviour* seems not to require Forgiveness, unless he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it; but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive those who are so far from repenting of their Enmity, that they still pursue it, and exercise it upon us. Thus our *Lord* teacheth us and thus *He* himself practised towards his *Persecutors*.

But this Appearance of Contradiction will quickly vanish, if we consider that *Forgiveness* is sometimes taken chiefly for *abstaining from Revenge*; and so far

we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilst they SERM.
 continue so, and though they do not repent: And XXXIII.
 not only so, but we are also to pray for them, and
 to do good Offices to them, especially of common
 Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept
 in the *Text*. But sometimes *Forgiveness* does signify
perfect Reconciliation to those that have offended
 us, so as to take them again into our *Friendship*;
 which they are by no means fit for, till they have re-
 nounced of their Enmity, and laid it aside. And this
 plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

It is further objected, That this seems to be a ve-
 ry imprudent Thing, and of dangerous Consequence
 to ourselves; because by bearing one Injury so pati-
 ently and forgiving it so easily, we invite more; and
 not only tempt our Enemy to go on, but others also by
 this Example to do the like: Which will make ill-
 natur'd Men to provoke us on purpose, with a crafty
 Design to wrest Benefits from us: For what bet-
 ter Trade can a Man drive, than to gain Benefits in
 Exchange for Injuries?

To this I answer *three* Things:

First, It is to be fear'd that there are but few so very
 good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Per-
 haps, of those that call themselves *Christians*, not
 One in a hundred. And he is not a cunning Man
 that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is
 the Odds of a Hundred to One against him, that
 his Enemy of his will take the first Opportunity to
 take his Revenge upon him.

Secondly, It is also on the other hand to be hoped,
 that but very few are so prodigiously bad, as to make
 so barbarous a Return for the unexpected Kindness of
 a generous Enemy. And this is Encouragement e-
 nough to the Practice of this Duty, if there be a pro-
 bable Hope that it will have a good Effect; and
 however if it should fall out otherwise, yet this
 would not be Reason enough to discourage our
 Goodness, especially since the Kindness which we do

to

SERM. to our Friends is liable almost to an equal Objection
 XXXIII. that they may prove ungrateful and become our E
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 nemies; it having been often seen that great Benefits  
 and such as are beyond Requital, instead of making  
 a Man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

*Thirdly*, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Pre  
 cept, that our Goodness should be blind and void of  
 all Prudence and Discretion, but that it should be  
 manag'd as to make our Enemy sensible both of his  
 own Fault, and of our Favour; and so as to give  
 him as little Encouragement, as there is Reason for  
 it, to hope to find the like Favour again upon the  
 like Provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do  
 the thing, but hath left it to our Prudence to do it  
 in such a manner as may be most effectual, both to  
 reclaim the Offender, and likewise to secure our  
 selves against future and further Injuries.

3. *Lastly*, It is objected, What can we do more  
 to our best Friends, than to love them and bless  
 them, than to do good to them and pray for them?  
 And are we then to make no Difference betwixt our  
 Enemies and our Friends?

Yes surely; and so we may, notwithstanding this  
 Precept: For there are Degrees of Love, and there  
 are Benefits of several Rates and Sizes. Those  
 of the first Rate we may with Reason bestow  
 upon our Friends, and with those of a second  
 or third Rate there is all the Reason in the World  
 why our Enemies should be very well contented.  
 Besides that, we may abstain from Revenge, yearn  
 and love our Enemy, and wish him and do him  
 good: and yet it will not presently be necessary that  
 we should take him into our Bosom, and treat and  
 trust him as our intimate and familiar Friend; For  
 every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our  
 Friend; much less one that hath been our Enemy  
 and perhaps is so still. There must be a great  
 Change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we  
 must have had long Experience of him before it will

fit, if ever it be so, to take him into our Friend-  
ship. SERM.  
XXXIII.

All that now remains is to make some *Inferences* from the Discourse which I have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they shall be these *four* :

I. If we think it so very difficult to demean our selves towards our Enemies, as the *Christian* Religion both plainly require us to do ; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good Offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in Prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to ourselves. One of the first Principles of human Wisdom, in the Conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, to have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be possible, to our selves. *St. Paul* lays a great Stress upon this, and presseth it very earnestly. For after he had forbidden Revenge, *Rom. 12. 17. Recompence to no Man evil for evil* : As if he were very sensible how hard a Matter it is to bring Men to this, he adviseth in the next Words to prevent, if it be possible, the Occasions of Revenge, *v. 18. If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men* : That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any Man. And that for two weighty Reasons :

The *first* I have already intimated ; because it is so very hard to behave ourselves towards Enemies as we ought. This we shall find to be a difficult Duty to Flesh and Blood ; and it will require great Wisdom and Consideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of this Command : For the fewer Enemies we have, the less Occasion will there be of contesting this hard Point with ourselves.

And the other Reason is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, because Enemies will come of themselves, and let a Man do what he can, he shall have some. Friendship is a thing that needs to be cultivated,



SERM. cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing;  
 XXXIII. but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will spring up of themselves without our Care and Toil. *The Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the *Devil*, will sow these *Tares in the Night*; and when we least discern it, will scatter the seeds of Discord and Enmity among Men; and will take an Advantage either from the Envy or Malice, or the Mistakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to see what Care and Pains some Men will take, to provoke Mankind against them; how they will lay about them, and snatch at Opportunities to make themselves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy Occasion slip by them: But all this Care and Fear surely is needless; we may safely trust an ill-natur'd World, that we shall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all it concerns every Man in Prudence to take great Care not to make personal Enemies to himself; for these are the *forest* and the *surest* of all other, and when there is an Opportunity for it, will sit hardest upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greatest, and yet they are many times more easily forgiven, than those which are done to particular Persons. For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Human Society, do not so sensibly touch and sting Men, as personal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in passion, and it is not only a great Indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are so. Heat of Prosecution belongs to particular Persons; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and desire to revenge them, and diligence to set on and sharpen the *Law*, that is chiefly to be dreaded: And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almost as few private as publick *Acts of Oblivion* pass'd in the World; and they commonly pass as slowly

slowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almost quite lost. SERM. XXXIII.

II. *Secondly*, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others? To those who never disobliged us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed; to those more especially, who stand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural Kindred, and to our spiritual Brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by the common Bond of Christianity; and lastly, to our Benefactors, and those who have been before-hand with us in Obligation: For all these are so many special Ties and Endearments of Men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Justice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all these and our Enemies, we ought to make a very wide and sensible difference, in our Carriage and Kindness towards them. And if we do not do so, we represent our *Saviour* as an unreasonable Lawgiver, and do perversely interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reasonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindness is here required towards our Enemies, it is certain that so much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deserved at our hands; nothing being more certain than that our *Blessed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any Precept of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Justice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the least to the common Reason of Mankind.

III. *Thirdly*, Hence we learn the Excellency and the Reasonableness of the *Christian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty so high in things which do so directly tend to the Perfection of *Human Nature*, and to the Peace of *Human Society*, and which, if all things be rightly consider'd, are most agreeable to the clearest and best Reason of Mankind: So that

SERM. those things which were heretofore look'd upon, and  
 XXXIII. that only by some few of the wiser Sort, as Heroical  
 Instances of Goodness, and above the common Rate  
 of Humanity, are now by the *Christian Religion*  
 made the indispensable Duties of all Mankind. And  
 the Precepts of no other Religion, that ever yet ap-  
 pear'd in the World, have advanced Human Na-  
 ture so much above itself, and are so well calculated  
 for the Peace and Happiness of the World, as the  
 Precepts of the *Christian Religion* are: For they  
 strictly forbid the doing of Injuries by way of Pre-  
 vention; and in Case they happen, they endeavour  
 to put a present Stop to the Progress of them, by so  
 severely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it must be acknowledg'd to  
 be a very untoward *Objection* against the Excellency  
 and Efficacy of the *Christian Religion*, that the Prac-  
 tice of so many *Christians* is so unequal to the Per-  
 fection of these Precepts. For who is there in the  
 Changes and Revolutions of Human Affairs, and  
 when the Wheel of Providence turns them upper-  
 most, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will  
 give them any Quarter? Nay, that does not greedily  
 seize upon the first Opportunities of Revenge,  
 and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a sud-  
 den Stoop upon them with all his Force and Vio-  
 lence; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and  
 at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces.

So that after all our Boasts of the Excellency of  
 our Religion, where is the Practice of it? This, I  
 confess, is a terrible *Objection* indeed; and I must  
 intreat of you, *my Brethren*, to help me to the best  
 Answer to it: Not by any nice *Distinctions* and *Specu-  
 lations* about it, but by the careful and honest  
 Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* against *Philosophy*.  
 That many that were Philosophers in their Opinions  
 were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never  
 thought by wise Men to be a good *Objection* against  
 Philosophy.



Philosophy. And unless we will lay more weight SERM.  
upon the *Objections* against Religion, and press them XXXIII.  
harder than we think it reasonable to do in any o-  
ther Case, we must acknowledge likewise that this  
*Objection* against Religion is of no Force. Men do  
not cast off the *Art of Physick*, because many *Phy-*  
*sicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not  
themselves follow those Prescriptions which they  
think fit to give to others; and there is a plain Rea-  
son for it, because their swerving from their own  
Rules doth not necessarily signify that their Rules  
are not good, but only that their Appetites are un-  
ruly, and too hard and headstrong for their Reason:  
Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules  
may be very reasonable, and yet they that give  
them may not follow them.

IV. The *fourth* and *last Inference* from this whole  
Discourse shall be this, That being convinced by  
what hath been said upon this Argument, of the  
Reasonableness of this Duty, we would resolve upon  
the Practice of it, whenever there is occasion offer'd  
for it in the Course of our Lives. I need not to put  
you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great oc-  
casion for it: I shall only say, that whenever there is  
so, nothing can be tied more strictly upon us than  
this Duty is.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confir-  
mation to me, to see the *Humanity* of the *Protestant*  
*Religion*, so plainly discovering itself, upon so many  
Occasions, in the Practice of the Professors of it.  
And setting aside all other Advantages which *our*  
Religion hath been evidently shewn to have above  
*Popery* in point of Reason and Argument, I cannot  
for my Life but think *that* to be the best Religion,  
which makes the best Men, and from the Nature of  
its Principles is apt to make them so; most kind  
and merciful, and charitable; and most free from  
Malice, and Revenge, and Cruelty.

SERM.

XXXIII.

And therefore our *Blessed Saviour*, who *knew what was in Man* better than any Man that ever was, knowing our great Reluctance and Backwardness to the Practice of this Duty, hath urg'd it upon us by such forcible and almost violent Arguments, that if we have any Tenderness for our selves we cannot refuse Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appease God towards us, so long as we our selves are implacable to Men; *Ver. 23d. of this Chapter, If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way: First go and be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* To recommend this Duty effectually to us, *He* gives it a Preference to all the *positive Duties of Religion: First go and be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* Till this Duty be discharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great Reason declare it to be a necessary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be *in Love and Charity with our Neighbours*; because this is a *Moral Duty*, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *positive* part of Religion, such as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to God; especially since in this *Blessed Sacrament* of Christ's Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveness of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us: Which how can we hope for from God, if we our selves be not ready to forgive one another?

*He shall have Judgment without Mercy*, says St. James, *who hath shewed no Mercy.* And in that excellent *Form of Prayer* which our Lord himself hath given us, *He* hath taught us so to ask Forgiveness of God, as not to expect it from Him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practise this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we

we put up this *Petition* to God [*Forgive us our Tref-* SERM.  
XXXIII.  
*passes as we forgive them that Trespafs against us ;*] we  
send up a terrible *Imprecation* against our selves, and  
do in effect beg of God not to forgive us. And  
therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon  
our Minds, our *Blessed Saviour* immediately after the  
Recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very  
remarkable Enforcement of this *Petition*, above all  
the rest ; *For if, says He, ye forgive men their Tref-*  
*passes, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : But*  
*if ye forgive not men their Trespaffes, neither will your*  
*Father forgive your trespaffes, Matth. 6. 14, 15.*

And our *Saviour* hath likewise in his *Gospel* repre-  
sented to us, both the Reasonableness of this Duty,  
and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very  
lively and affecting Parable, deliver'd by him to this  
purpose : *Matth. 18. 23. Concerning a wicked Ser-*  
*van', who when his Lord had but just before for-*  
*given him a vast Debt of ten thousand talents, took*  
*his poor Fellow-Servant by the throat, and, notwith-*  
*standing his humble Submission and earnest Intreaties*  
*to be favourable to him, haled him to Prison for a*  
*trifling Debt of an hundred Pence. And the Applica-*  
*tion which he makes of this Parable, at the End of*  
*it, is very terrible, and such as ought never to go*  
*out of our Minds ; So likewise, says He, shall my*  
*heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye do not from your*  
*Hearts forgive every one his Brother his Trespaffes,*  
*v. 25. One might be apt to think at first View, that*  
*this Parable was overdone, and wanted something*  
*of a due Decorum ; it being hardly credible, that a*  
*man after he had been so mercifully and generously*  
*dealt withal, as upon his humble Request to have so*  
*huge a debt so freely forgiven, should whilst the*  
*Memory of so much Mercy was fresh upon him, e-*  
*ven the very next moment, handle his Fellow-Ser-*  
*vant, who had made the same humble Submission*  
*and Request to him which he had done to his Lord,*  
*with so much Roughness and Cruelty, for so incon-*



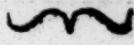
SERM. fiderable a Sum. This, I say, would hardly seem  
 XXXIII. credible; did we not see in Experience how very un-  
 reasonable and unmerciful some Men are, and with  
 what Confidence they can ask and expect great Mercy from God, when they will shew none to Men.

The Greatness of the Injuries which are done to us, is the Reason commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makest this an Argument why thou canst not forgive thy Brother, lay thine Hand upon thine Heart, and bethink thy self how many more and much greater Offences thou hast been guilty of against God: Look up to that Just and Powerful Being that is above, and consider well, Whether thou dost not both expect and stand in need of more Mercy and Favour from *Him*, than thou canst find in thine Heart to shew to thine offending Brother.

We have all certainly great Reason to expect, that as we use one another, God will likewise deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Christians? And how hardly are the best of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them? And this, notwithstanding that all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveness from God do depend upon it. How strangely inconsistent is our Practice and our Hope? And what a wide distance is there between our Expectations from God, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope so easily to be forgiven, and yet be so hard to forgive?

Would we have God, for *Christ's* sake, to forgive us those numberless and monstrous provocations which we have been guilty of against his Divine Majesty? And shall we not for *His* sake, for whose sake we our selves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be obliged to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and most miserable shall we be to all Eternity, if

if God do not all this to us, which we think to be SERM.  
 so very hard and unreasonable for us to do to one XXXIII.  
 another. 

I have sometimes wonder'd how it should come to pass, that so many Persons should be so apt to despair of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God to them; especially considering what clear and express Declarations God hath made of his readiness to forgive our greatest Sins and Provocations upon our sincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we shall consider with how much difficulty Men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are persuaded to refrain from flying upon those who have given us any considerable Provocation. So that when Men look into themselves, and shall carefully observe the motions of their own Minds towards those against whom they have been justly exasperated, they will see but too much reason to think that Forgiveness is no such easy matter.

But our Comfort in this Case is, That God is not as Man; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.

And the best way to keep our selves from despairing of God's Mercy and Forgiveness to us, is to be easy to grant Forgiveness to others: And without this, as God hath reason to deny Forgiveness to us, so we our selves have all the reason in the World utterly to despair of it.

It would almost transport a *Christian* to read that admirable Passage of the great *Heathen* Emperor and Philosopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*, l. 7. *Can the gods*, says he, *that are immortal, for the continuance of so many Ages, bear without impatience with such and so many Sinners as have ever been; and not only so, but likewise take care of them, and provide for them, that they want nothing: And dost thou so grievously take*  
 U 4 on,

SERM. on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou that  
 XXXIII art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of  
 those Sinners thy self.

I will conclude this whole Discourse with those weighty and pungent Sayings of the wise Son of Sirach, Eccl. 23. 1, 2, 3, 4. *He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy Neighbour that hath hurt thee, so shall thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One Man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon of the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a Man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own Sins?*

Enable us, O Lord, by thy Grace, to practise this excellent and difficult Duty of our Religion: And then, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that Trespass against us, for thy mercies sake in Jesus Christ: To whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Adoration and Obedience, both now and ever. Amen.*

SERMON



# SERMON XXXIV.

The Care of our Souls, the one thing  
needful.

*Preach'd before the King and Queen at  
Hampton-Court, April the 14th,  
1689.*

---

LUKE X. 42.

*But One thing is needful,*

IN the Accounts of Wise Men, one of the first SERM.  
Rules and Measures of Human Actions is this, XXXIV  
*To regard every thing more or less, according to the*  
*Degree of its Consequence and Importance to our*  
*Happiness.* That which is most necessary to that  
End ought in all Reason to be minded by us in the  
first Place, and other Things only so far as they are  
consistent with that great End, and subservient to  
it.

Our *Blessed Saviour* here tells us, that *there is one  
Thing needful*, that is, one Thing which ought first  
and principally to be regarded by us: And what  
*that* is, it is of great Concernment to us all to  
know, that we may mind and pursue it as it de-  
serves.

And

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And we may easily understand what it is, by considering the Context and the Occasion of these Words, which was briefly this: Our *Saviour*, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertained at the House of two devout Sisters. The *elder*, who had the Care and Management of the Family and the Affairs of it, was employ'd in making Entertainment for such a *Guest*: The *other* sat at our *Saviour's* Feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preached.

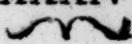
The *elder* finding herself not able to do all the Business alone, desires of our *Saviour* that he would command her Sister *to come and help her*. Upon this our *Saviour* gives her this gentle Reprehension, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful*. And what *that* is, he declares in the next Words, *And Mary hath chosen that good part; which shall not be taken away from her*; that is, she hath chosen to take Care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our *Saviour* doth not altogether blame *Martha* for her respectful care of Him, but commends her *Sister* for her greater care of her Soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wise Choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his *Doctrine*, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to his *Person*.

From the *Words* thus explain'd, the *Observation* which I shall make is this:

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is *the one thing necessary*, and that which every Man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This *Observation* seems to be plainly contain'd in the *Text*. I shall handle it as briefly as I can; and

and then by way of Application shall endeavour SERM.  
to persuade you and my self to mind this *one thing* XXXIV  
*necessary.* 

And in speaking to this serious and weighty Argument I shall do these *two* things :

*First*, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does consist.

*Secondly*, To convince Men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I shall shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the *five* following *Particulars*, in which I think the main business of Religion, and the due care of our Souls does consist.

*First*, In the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

*Secondly*, In the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

*Thirdly*, In the constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion.

*Fourthly*, In avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

*Fifthly*, In the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Virtues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls doth consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For



SERM. For this knowledge of the necessary Principles and  
 XXXIV Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good  
 Practice, wherein the life of Religion doth consist. And without this no Man can be truly religious. *Without faith*, faith the Apostle to the Hebrews, it is impossible to please God: For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, Heb. 11. 6. Now these two expressions of *pleasing God* and *seeking Him*, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signify Religion, or the Worship and Service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and persuasion of these two fundamental Principles of all Religion, that *there is a God*, and, that *He will reward those that serve him*: Because unless a Man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as Religion.

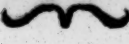
And this knowledge of the necessary Principles of Religion our blessed Saviour calls *eternal Life*, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says He, *to know thee, the only true God; and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ*; that is, to be rightly instructed in the knowledge of the only true God, and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord: Under which two general Heads are comprehended all the necessary Principles both of the natural and of the Christian Religion.

And to the attaining of this Knowledge which is absolutely necessary to Salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is required; but only a teachable disposition and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easy, and lie level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that God who would have all men to be saved, hath not provided for the Salvation of all Men. And therefore, now that the Knowledge of the true God and

the light of Christianity are spread abroad in the SERM.  
 World, all that enjoy the Gospel are, or may be, XXXIV  
 sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their  
 happiness : Unless such care be used, as is in the  
 Church of *Rome*, to take away the key of knowledge,  
 and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an  
 unknown Tongue ; and this, as they pretend, upon  
 a very charitable consideration, only it is to be hop'd  
 that it is not true, that the generality of Mankind  
 are mad, and have need to be kept in the dark.  
 But supposing Men to be allow'd those means of  
 knowledge which God affords, and hath appointed  
 for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie  
 in Men's Understandings, but in their Wills : On-  
 ly when Men know these things, they must attend  
 to them and consider them ; that the light which is  
 in their Understandings may warm their Hearts, and  
 have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls consist in the fre-  
 quent examination of our Lives, and Actions, and  
 in a sincere Repentance for all the errors and  
 miscarriages of them : In a more *particular* and  
 deep Humiliation and Repentance for deliberate and  
 wilful sins, so far as we can call them to our remem-  
 brance ; and in a *general* repentance for Sins of *Ig-  
 norance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exer-  
 cise whereof we are always to remember, that the  
 nature of true Repentance doth not consist only in an  
 humble confession of our Sins to God, and a hearty  
 trouble and contrition for them ; but chiefly in the  
 stedfast purpose and resolution of a better Life, and  
 in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformati-  
 on and amendment.

By the constant exercise hereof, we are put into a  
 safe condition ; provided that we persevere in this holy  
 resolution and course : But if we still retain the love  
 and practice of any known sin, or if after we have  
 taken up these good resolutions we return again to  
 an

SERM. an evil course ; this is a clear Evidence, either that  
 XXXIV  our Repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are  
 are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will  
 continue in that dangerous state, till we have renew'd  
 our repentance and made it good in the following  
 course of our Lives.

III. The due care of our Souls consists in the  
 constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion,  
 both in private and in publick if there be opportu-  
 nity for it, especially at proper times and upon  
 more solemn occasions : By fervent Prayer to God,  
 and by hearing and reading the Word of God with  
 reverence and godly fear : By frequenting his pub-  
 lick Worship, and demeaning our selves in it with  
 that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the pre-  
 sence and service of the great and glorious Majesty  
 of God, who observes our behaviour and sees into our  
 hearts : And by receiving the Blessed Sacrament, as  
 often as we have opportunity with due preparation  
 and devotion of mind.

For these are not only outward testimonies of our  
 inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed  
 by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and  
 goodness. And whoever neglects these Duties of  
 Religion, or performs them in a slight and super-  
 ficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath nei-  
 ther a due sense of God, nor care of himself :  
 for in vain does any man pretend that he does  
 in good earnest design the End, when he neglects  
 the best and most proper means for the attainment  
 of it.

IV. The due care of our Souls consists also in  
 avoiding those things which are pernicious to our  
 Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their  
 Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known  
 Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the  
 Sword's point, and do endanger our Salvation as  
 much as a deep wound in our Body would do our  
 Life :



Life: And though such a wound may perhaps be SERM.  
cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that XXXIV  
commits any wilful Sin knows the dismal conse-  
quence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry  
him at last: For upon such a provocation God may  
leave the Sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace  
from him, and give him up to a hard and impeni-  
tent heart to proceed from evil to worse, and from  
one wickedness to another, till he be finally ruin'd.  
So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God,  
and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the  
World is very pernicious to the Souls of men; be-  
cause it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our  
minds with earthly cares and designs; it tempts men  
to forsake God and Religion when their worldly in-  
terests come in competition with them; and betrays  
them to fraud, and falshood, and all kind of injus-  
tice, and *many other hurtful lusts which throw the Soul  
into perdition.*

But besides these dangers which are more visible  
and apparent, there is another which is less discerni-  
ble because it hath the face of Piety; and that is  
*Faction* in Religion: By which I mean an unpeace-  
able and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Re-  
ligion either doth not at all, or but very little con-  
sist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsis-  
tent with several of the most eminent *Christian*  
Graces and Virtues, as *humility, love, peace, meek-  
ness*, and *forbearance* towards those that differ from  
us; it hath likewise *two* very great mischiefs com-  
monly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious  
to Religion and the Souls of Men.

*First*, That it takes such men off from minding  
the more necessary and essential parts of Religion.  
They are so zealous about small things, *the titthing  
of mint, and anise, and cummin*, that they neglect the  
*weightier things of the Law, faith, and mercy, and  
judgment, and the love of God*: They spend so much  
of

SERM. of their time and heat about things doubtful, that  
 XXXIV they have no leisure to mind the things that are  
 necessary: And are so concern'd about little *speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the practice of Religion is almost wholly neglected by them: And they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Error and Heresy in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded People! that do not consider that the greatest Heresy in the World is a wicked Life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion: And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding, than one fault of his Will.

*Secondly*, Another great mischief which attends this temper is, that Men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great Piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the Outworks of Religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good Christians, but to be of such a party, and to be listed of such a Church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate, and uncharitably to censure all the rest of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very sure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their Sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themselves *good Catholics*, and all others *Hereticks*? And that having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a mere Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any

Church

Church in the World that had this fantastical Privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it. SERM. XXXIV

Therefore, as thou valuest thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion ; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employ'd about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of Religion will be neglected : Besides that, a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that Spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all Factions, but more especially in those of Religion.

V. The due Care of our Souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Virtues of a good Life ; or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, in *exercising our selves always to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and men*. For herein is Religion best seen, in an equal and uniform practice of every part of our Duty : Not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men : Not only in restraining our selves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our Lusts, and governing our Passions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have prudent care of his health and life, must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them ; but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal : He must not only endeavour to secure his Head and Heart from being wounded ; but must have a tender care of every part ; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight, but that some have died of it : In like manner, the care of our Souls consists in an universal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it : Though we ought to have a

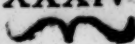


SERM. more especial regard to those Duties which are  
 XXXIV more considerable, and wherein Religion doth mainly consist; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chastity* in regard of ourselves, *Charity* towards the Poor, *Truth* and *Justice*, *Goodness* and *Kindness* towards all Men: But then no other *Grace* and *Virtue*, though of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what instances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any Man think that all this is an easy business, and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and industry will serve for this purpose: To master and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Passions under the command and government of our Reason, and to attain to a good degree of every Christian Grace and Virtue: That *Faith* and *Hope* and *Charity*, *Humility* and *Meekness* and *Patience* may all have their perfect work; and that, as St. *James* says, we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good Man, and of a good Christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very short and easy business, and to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it: Which is so far from being the true Notion of Christian *Faith*, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very Definition of *Presumption*. For the *Bible* plainly teacheth us, that unless our Faith work by *Charity*, and purify our Hearts, and reform our Lives; unless like *Abraham's* Faith it be perfected by works, it is but a dead Faith, and will in no wise avail to our Justification and Salvation. And our Blessed Saviour, the great Author and  
 finisher

*finisher of our Faith*, hath no where, that I know of, SERM.  
 said one word to this purpose, That Faith separated XXXIV  
 from Obedience and a good Life will save any Man:   
 But he hath said very much to the contrary, and that  
 very plainly. For he promiseth Blessedness to none,  
 but those who live in the practice of those Christian  
 Graces and Virtues which are particularly mention'd  
 by him in the beginning of his excellent *Sermon* upon  
 the Mount; *Matth.* 5. 3, 4, &c. of *Humility*, and  
*Repentance*, and *Meekness*, and *Righteousness*, and  
*Mercifulness*, and *Purity*, and *Peaceableness*, and  
*Patience* under Persecutions and Sufferings for Right-  
 eousness sake. And afterwards in the same *Sermon*,  
*Matth.* 7. 21. *Not every one*, saith he, *that saith unto*  
*me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of*  
*Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which*  
*is in Heaven.* And again, v. 24. *Whosoever hear-*  
*eth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken*  
*him unto a wise Man which built his house upon a Rock.*  
 And afterwards he tells us, v. 26, 27. that whoso-  
 ever builds his Hopes of eternal Happiness upon any  
 other foundation, than that Faith of the Gospel and  
 the Practice of its Precepts, doth *build his house*  
*upon the sand*; which when it comes to be tried by  
 the Rain and the Winds, will fall; and the fall of it  
 will be great. And elsewhere; *John* 13. 17. *If ye*  
*know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* And he  
 does very severely check the vain confidence and  
 presumption of those, who will needs rely upon him  
 for salvation without keeping his Commandments;  
*Why call ye me*, says he, *Lord, Lord, and do not the*  
*thing which I say?* *Luke* 6. 46.

Does any Man think that he can be saved without  
 loving God and Christ? And this, saith St. *John*,  
*is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments,*  
*1 Joh.* 5. 3. And again *1 John* 2. 4. *He that saith I*  
*know him*, and by the same reason, *he that saith I*  
*love him, and keepeth not his Commandments, he is a*  
*liar, and the truth is not in him.* *John* 14. 15. *If*

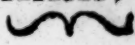
SERM. *ye love me, saith our Blessed Lord, keep my Command-  
XXXIV ments. And again, v. 21. He that hath my Com-  
mandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*

Does any Man think, that any but the Children of God shall be heirs of Eternal Life? Hear then what St. John saith, 1 John 3. 7. *Little Children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. And again, v. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God.*

In a word, this is the perpetual tenor of the Bible, from the beginning of it to the end, Gen. 3. 7. *If thou dost well, saith God to Cain, shalt thou not be accepted? And again, Isa. 3. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. And in the Gospel, when the young man came to our Saviour to be instructed by him, what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life, our Lord gives him this short and plain advice, Matth. 19. 17. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments. And in the very last Chapter of the Bible we find this solemn declaration, Blessed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates into the City, that is, into Heaven, which the Apostle to the Hebrews calls the City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. So vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual Faith, without holiness and obedience of Life.*

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to convince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of minding Religion and our Souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean that it is so in order to some End, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessities of Life, without which Men cannot



cannot subsist and live in a tolerable Condition in SERM. this World : And that is necessary to our eternal hap- XXXIV  
piness, without which it cannot be attain'd. 

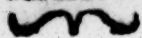
Now happiness being our chief End, whatever is necessary to *that* is more necessary than any thing else ; and in comparison of *that*, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince Men of the Necessity of Religion, I shall briefly shew, That it is a certain way to happiness : That it is certain that there is no other way but this : And that if we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

*First*, That Religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have God's express Declaration and Promise. The best assurance that can be. *He that cannot lye hath promised eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality.* All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable, is promised to us upon the terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* A mighty reward for a little service ; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days : A happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

*Secondly*, 'Tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, *That if we live after the flesh, we shall die ; but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live :* That without holiness no man shall see the Lord : And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of Covetousness, or Adultery, or Malice, or Revenge, shall not enter into the Kingdom of God : And we have reason to believe Him concerning the terms of this happiness, and the means of attaining it, by whose fa-

SERM. your and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers  
XXXIV of it.



And if God had not said it in his Word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only a condition of our happiness, but a necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purged from their Lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devilish Passions of *Malice*, and *Envy*, and *Revenge*, before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with him *who is love, and dwells in love*.

*Thirdly*, If we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable. The *Word of Truth* hath said it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil*. Nay, if God should hold his hand, and should inflict no positive torment upon sinners, yet they could not spare themselves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked life which they had led in this World, and the Stings of their own Consciences must necessarily make them miserable, whenever their own Thoughts are let loose upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they shall have nothing either of pleasure or business to divert them.

So that if we be concerned, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those Miseries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be necessary for us to mind Religion; without which we can neither attain that Happiness, nor escape those Miseries.

All that now remains, is to persuade you and myself seriously to mind this *one thing* necessary. And to this end, I shall apply my discourse to two sorts of persons; those who are remiss in a matter of so great concern-

concernment, and those who are grossly careless, and mind it not at all.

SERM.

XXXIV

*First*, To those who are remiss in a matter of such vast concernment : Who mind the business of Religion, in some degree, but not so heartily and vigorously as a matter of such infinite consequence doth require and deserve.

And here I fear the very best are greatly defective ; and so much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the necessity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man shall ever be admitted into the mansions of the Blessed : They believe likewise, that according to the degrees of every mans holiness and virtue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happiness in the other ; that *he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly, and he that sows plentifully shall reap plentifully* ; and that the measure of every man's reward shall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions ? And notwithstanding we are allur'd by the most glorious promises and hopes, and aw'd by the greatest fears, and urg'd by the most forcible argument in the world, the evident necessity of the thing ; yet how faintly do we run the race that is set before us ? How frequently and how easily are we stopp'd or diverted in our Christian Course by very little Temptations ? How cold, and how careless, and how inconstant are we in the Exercises of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty ? Did we act reasonably, and as men use to do in matters of much less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity doth depend.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security, and resolve to make that the great business of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity : And



SERM. when we are immers'd in the cares and business of  
 XXXIV this life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought  
 often come into our minds, That there is *one thing*  
*needful*, and which therefore deserves above all other  
 things to be regarded by us.

*Secondly*, There are another sort of Persons, who  
 are grossly careless of this *one thing necessary*, and do  
 not seem to mind it at all : Who go on securely in  
 an evil Course, as if either they had no Souls, or no  
 concernment for them. I may say to these as the  
 Master of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was fast  
 asleep in the Storm, *What meanest thou, O Sleeper ?*  
*Arise and call upon thy God.* When our Souls are e-  
 very Moment in danger of sinking, it is high time  
 for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every Oar, and  
 to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so  
 precious from a danger so threatening and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of  
 this Argument of necessity in other cases, and very  
 carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of  
 this life, and how to avoid those great temporal e-  
 evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering ;  
 But the great necessity of all, and that which is  
 mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eterni-  
 ty, to secure the everlasting Happiness, and to pre-  
 vent the endless and insupportable miseries of ano-  
 ther World. *This, this, is the one thing necessary ;*  
 and to this we ought to bend and apply all our care  
 and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the necessity of things,  
 and wisely weigh the concernments of this Life and  
 the other in a just and equal balance, we should be  
 ashamed to misplace our diligence and industry as  
 we do ; to bestow our best thoughts and time about  
 these vain and perishing things, and to take no care  
 about that *better part which cannot be taken from us.*  
 Fond and vain men that we are ; who are so solici-  
 tous how we shall pass a few days in this world, but  
 matter not what shall become of us for ever.

But

But as careless as we are now about these things, time will come when we shall sadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God shall be pleas'd to grant us then so much time and use of our Reason as to be able to recollect ourselves, we shall then be convinc'd how great a necessity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being sensible of the value of them, till we are ready to despair of saving them.

But, blessed be God, this is not yet our case, though we know not how soon it may be. Let us then be wise, and consider these things in time, lest Death and Despair should overtake and oppress us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to consider that this is the best opportunity of our Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now most capable of the best impressions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts be *harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin*: This is *the acceptable time, this is the day of Salvation*.

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might. For it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, That the best thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible World which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it, and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your Eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many

SERM. many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are  
 XXXIV aware: Let us but judge of things now, as we shall  
 all shortly judge of them: And let us live now, as  
 after a few Days we shall every one of us wish with  
 all our Souls that we had liv'd; and be as serious, as  
 if we were ready to step into the other World, and  
 to enter upon that change which Death will quickly  
 make in every one of us. Strange Stupidity of Men!  
 That a change so near, so great, so certain, should  
 affect us so coldly, and be so little consider'd and  
 provided for by us: That the things of Time should  
 move us so much, and the things of Eternity so lit-  
 tle. What will we do when this change comes, if  
 we have made no preparation for it?

If we be Christians, and do verily believe the  
 things which I am speaking of, and that after a  
 few days more are pass'd Death will come, and draw  
 aside that thick veil of Sense and Security which  
 now hides these things from us; and shew us that  
 fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth  
 to think upon: I say if we believe this, it is time for  
 us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his  
 health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult  
 of this world, and made that careful preparation for  
 Death and a better Life, as may give him that con-  
 stancy and firmness of Spirit, as to be able to bear  
 the thoughts and approaches of this great change  
 without amazement; and to have a mind almost e-  
 qually poiz'd between that strong inclination of  
 Nature which makes us desirous to live, and that  
 wiser dictate of Reason and Religion which should  
 make us willing and contented to die whenever  
 God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these  
 things, because our eyes are dazzl'd with the false  
 light and splendor of earthly felicity: But *this* as-  
 surely is more worth than all *the Kingdoms of the*  
*World and the Glory of them*, to be able to possess  
 our



our Souls at such a time, and to be at perfect Peace SERM.  
 with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed trusting* XXXIV  
*in God*: To have our Accounts made up, and  
 Estate of our immortal Souls as well settled and se-  
 cur'd, as by the assistance of God's Grace human care  
 and endeavour, tho' mix'd with such human frailty,  
 is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are  
 utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first  
 and great care, and to prefer it to all other inte-  
 rests whatsoever. And to this end, we should re-  
 solutely disentangle our selves from worldly cares and  
 incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have  
 competent liberty and leisure to attend this great  
 concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit po-  
 sition and preparation for another World: That  
 when Sickness and Death shall come, we may not  
 act our last part indecently and confusedly, and  
 have a great deal of work to do when we shall want  
 both time and all other advantages to do it in:  
 Whereby our Souls, when they will stand most in  
 need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be  
 left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and  
 in an anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become  
 of them for ever.

To conclude: This care of Religion and our  
 Souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparison of  
 it we are to neglect the very necessities of Life.  
 So our Lord teacheth us, *Matth. 6. 31, 33. Take*  
*no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or what*  
*shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be cloathed?*  
*But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righte-*  
*ousness.* The Calls of God and Religion are so  
 very pressing and importunate, that they admit of  
 no delay or excuse whatsoever: This our Saviour sig-  
 nifies to us by denying the *Disciple*, whom he had  
 call'd to follow *him*, leave to go and bury his Fa-  
 ther; *Let the dead*, says he, *bury their dead, but do thou*  
*follow me.*

There

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the business of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us! O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!* Which God grant we may all do, *in this our day*, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*; to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever, *Amen*.

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## SERMON XXXV.

Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.

*Preach'd before the QUEEN at Whitehall, March 7. 1689-90.*

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\* MATTH. XXV. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal,*

SERM.  
XXXV.

**A**MONG all the Arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of Men, which are fetch'd from another World; and from the final state of good and bad Men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in

in the latter part of this Chapter, he gives us of SERM.  
the Judgment of the great Day, namely, that at the XXXV.  
end of the World the Son of Man shall come in his  
glory, with his Holy Angels; and shall sit upon the  
Throne of his Glory; and all Nations shall be gathered  
before him, and shall be separated into two  
great Companies, the Righteous and the Wicked;  
who shall stand the one on the Right hand and the  
other on the Left of this great Judge, who shall  
pronounce Sentence severally upon them according  
to the actions which they have done in this Life:  
The Righteous shall be rewarded with eternal hap-  
piness, and the wicked shall be sentenc'd to everlast-  
ing punishment. *And these, that is, the Wicked shall*  
*go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous*  
*into Life eternal.*

The Words are plain and need no explication.  
For I take it for granted, that every one, at first  
hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the dif-  
ference between the Righteous and the Wicked, and  
between endless Happiness and Misery: But al-  
though these Words be so very easy to be understood,  
they can never be too much considered by us. The  
Scope and Design of them is, to represent to us the  
different Fates of good and bad Men in another  
World, and that their ends *there*, will be as diffe-  
rent as their Ways and Doings have been *here* in  
this World: The serious consideration whereof is the  
greatest discouragement to Sin, and the most power-  
ful Argument in the World to a holy and virtuous  
Life: Because it is an Argument taken from our  
greatest and most lasting interest, our happiness or  
our Misery to all Eternity: A concernment of that  
vast consequence, that it must be the greatest Stupi-  
dity and Folly in the World for any Man to ne-  
glect it.

This eternal State of Rewards and Punishments  
in another World, our Blessed Saviour hath clearly  
revealed to us. And as to one part of it, *viz.* That  
good



SERM. good Men shall be eternally happy in another World.  
 XXXV. every one gladly admits it : But many are loth that  
 the other part should be true, concerning the eternal  
 punishment of wicked Men. And therefore they  
 pretend that it is contrary to the Justice of God to  
 punish temporary Crimes with eternal Torments.  
 Because Justice always observes a proportion between  
 Offences and Punishments; but between temporary  
 Sins and eternal Punishments there is no proportion.  
 And as this seems hard to be reconciled with Justice,  
 so much more with that excess of Goodness which we  
 suppose to be in God.

And therefore they say that though God seem to  
 have declared that impenitent Sinners shall be everlast-  
 ingly punish'd, yet these declarations of Scripture  
 are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may  
 be able to reconcile them with the essential Perfection  
 of the Divine Nature.

This is the full Force and Strength of the Ob-  
 jection. And my Work at this time shall be to clear,  
 if I can, this difficult point. And that for these  
 two Reasons. *First*, For the Vindication of the  
 Divine Justice and Goodness: *That God may be*  
*justified in his sayings, and appear righteous when*  
*he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, Because the Belief of  
 the Threatnings of God in their utmost extent is of  
 so great a moment to a good Life, and so great a  
 discouragement to Sin: For the Sting of Sin is the  
 Terror of eternal punishment; and if Men were  
 once set free from the fear and belief of this, the  
 most powerful restraint from Sin would be taken  
 away.

So that in Answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour  
 to prove these two things.

*First*, That the eternal punishment of wicked  
 Men in another World is plainly threatned in Scrip-  
 ture.

*Secondly*, That this is not inconsistent either with  
 the Justice or the Goodness of God.

*First,*

*First*, That the eternal Punishment of wicked Men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following *Texts*, Matth. 18. SERM. XXXV.

8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* And Matth. 25. 41. *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And here in the *Text*, *These*, that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment.* And Mark 9. it is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our Saviour, *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And 2 *Thes.* 1. 9. *speaking of them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son, it is said of them, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.*

I know very well that great Endeavour hath been used to avoid the Force of these *Texts*, by shewing that the Words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited Sense, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signify for a long time and till the end of the *Jewish Dispensation*. And in the *Epistle* of St. *Jude*, *verse 7th.* the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gommorah* are said to be *set forth for an Example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is, of a fire that was not extinguished till those Cities were utterly consumed.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the aforementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the Words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signify an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently proved by the Instances alledg'd to to this purpose. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger Sense, and so as necessarily to signify an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said *to live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness

SERM. nefs in another World is promised to good men,  
 XXXV. and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord*. Now  
 the very same Words and Expressions are us'd concerning the Punishment of wicked Men in another Life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both because if God had intended to have told us that the Punishment of wicked men shall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than those that are used in this case, whereby to express to us a duration without end: And likewise, which is almost a peremptory decision of the thing, because the duration of the punishment of wicked men, is in the very same sentence express'd by the very same word which is us'd for the duration of the happiness of the righteous: as is evident from the *Text, These*, speaking of the Wicked, *shall go away*, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, *into eternal punishment*, but the righteous, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *into life eternal*. I proceed to the

*Second* thing I propos'd; namely, to shew that this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be answer'd several ways, none of which seems to me to give clear and full satisfaction to it.

*First*, It is said by some, that because sin is infinite in respect of the Object against whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deserves an infinite punishment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of subtilty than of solidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Person against whom any Offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reason all offences against God are certainly the greatest of all others: But that Crimes should hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted; and that  
 for



for this plain reason; because then the evil and de-  
merit of all sins must necessarily be equal; for the  
demerit of no sin can be more than infinite: And if  
the demerit of all sins be equal, there can then be no  
reason for the degrees of punishment in another  
World: But to deny that there are degree  
of punishment there, is not only contrary to  
reason, but to our *Saviour's* express assertion, that  
some shall be *beaten with many stripes*, and some with  
fewer, and that it shall be *more tolerable for some in  
the day of Judgment* than for others. Besides, that  
by the same reason that the least sin that is com-  
mitted against God may be said to be infinite  
because of its object, the least punishment that is in-  
flicted by God may be said to be infinite because of  
its Author; and then all punishments from God  
as well as all sins against him would be equal;  
which is palpably absurd. So that this answer is by  
no means sufficient to break the force of this Ob-  
jection.

*Secondly*, It is said by others, that if wicked men  
lived for ever in this World they would sin for ever,  
and therefore they deserve to be punished for ever.  
But this hath neither truth nor reason enough in it to  
give satisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if  
a man lived never so long he would never repent and  
grow better?

Besides that the Justice of God doth only punish  
the sins which men have committed in this life, and  
not those which they might possibly have committed  
if they had lived longer.

*Thirdly*, it is said in the last place, that God doth  
set before men everlasting Happiness and Misery,  
and the sinner hath his Choice. Here are two things  
said which bid fairly towards an answer.

*First*, That reward which God promiseth to our  
obedience is equal to the punishment which he threat-  
ens to our disobedience, but yet this I doubt will not  
reach the business: Because though it be not contra-

SERM. ry to Justice to exceed in Rewards, that being mat-  
 XXXV. ter of mere favour; yet it may be so, to exceed in  
 ~~~~~ punishments.

Secondly, It is further said, that the sinner in this case hath nothing to complain of, since he hath his own choice. This I confess is enough to silence the sinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his destruction is of himself; but yet after all that, it does not seem so clearly to satisfy the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by these following Considerations.

First, Let it be consider'd, that the measure of penalties with respect to Crimes is not only, nor always to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of Government; which requires such penalties as may, if it be possible, secure the observation of the Law, and determen from the breach of it. And the reason of this is evident, because if it were once declared that no man should suffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the consequence of this would be that sinners would be better husbands of their time and sin so much the faster, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might satisfy for their sins by a shorter punishment.

And it would be unreasonable likewise upon another account; because some of the greatest sins may perhaps be committed in the shortest time; for instance, *Murder*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once, kills him for ever. The act of murder may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objecti-

on

on of temporary Crimes being punish'd with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force. SERM.
XXXV.

Besides that, whoever considers how ineffectual the threatening even of eternal torments is to the greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfy'd that a less penalty than that of eternal sufferings would to the far greatest part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishments; but from one great end and design of Government, which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver; then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal Sufferings, Justice cannot be said to be concerned in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater Sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented*; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted

SERM. in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering,
XXXV. without making any difference in the duration of
it.

The case then in short stands thus: Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lie at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what punishment upon us he pleaseth: And consequently, to secure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deter men from the transgression of it. And this is not esteemed unjust among men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all, he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: But in threatening it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand, and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned, any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the Punishment that he hath threatned: and because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this an impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Nineveh*, and his peevish *Prophet* did understand the threatening to be absolute, and was very
angry

angry with God for employing him in a message that SERM.
was not made good. But God understood his own XXXV.
right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the
threatning he had denounced, and for all *Jonah* was
so touch'd in honour that he had rather have died
himself than *Nineveh* should not have been de-
stroy'd, only to have verifi'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath con-
firmed these threatnings by an Oath, which is a cer-
tain sign of the immutability of his Counsel; and
therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and ri-
gorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan*
was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who re-
bell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impe-
nitent Sinners under the Gospel: consequently the
Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*,
when he *swore in his wrath that they should not enter*
into his rest, that is, into the land of *Canaan*, doth
equally oblige Him to execute his threatning upon
all impenitent Sinners under the Gospel, that *they*
shall never enter into the Kingdom of God. And this
is very truly reason'd, so far as the threatning ex-
tends; which, if we attend to the plain words of it,
beyond which threatnings are never to be stretch'd,
doth not seem to reach any further than to the exclu-
sion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven, and their fal-
ling finally short of the rest and happiness of the
Righteous. Which however, directly overthrows the
Opinion ascrib'd to *Origen*, that the Devils and wicked
Men shall all be saved at last; God having *sworn in*
his wrath that they should never enter into his rest.

But then, as to the eternal misery and punishment
threatned to wicked men in the other World,
though it be not necessarily comprehended in this
Oath that they *shall not enter into his rest*; yet we
are to consider, that both the tenor of the *Sentence*
which our blessed *Saviour* hath assur'd us will be
pass'd upon them at the Judgment of the great Day,
Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire; and likewise
this

SERM. this Declaration in the Text, that *the wicked shall go*
 XXXV. *away into everlasting punishment*, though they do not
 restrain God from doing what he pleases, yet they
 cut off from the Sinner all reasonable hopes of the re-
 laxation or mitigation of them. For since the great
 Judge of the world hath made so plain and express
 a Declaration, and will certainly pass such a Sen-
 tence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in
 the world for the Sinner to entertain any hope of es-
 caping it, and to venture his Soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon
 this Argument that seems material. And that is
 this, that the words *death* and *destruction* and *perish-*
ing, whereby the punishment of wicked Men in the
 other world is most frequently express'd in *Scripture*,
 do most properly import *Annihilation* and an utter
 end of Being; and therefore may reasonably be so
 understood in the matter of which we are now speak-
 ing.

To this I answer, that these words, and those
 which answer them in other Languages, are often
 both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, used to signify
 a state of great misery and suffering, without the
 utter extinction of the miserable. Thus God is often
 in *Scripture* said to bring *destruction* upon a Nation
 when he sends great Judgments upon them, though
 they do not exterminate and make an utter end of
 them.

And nothing is more common in most Languages,
 than by *perishing* to express a person's being undone
 and made very miserable. As in that known pas-

* *Ita me* sage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the Roman Senate: *
Dii Deæque Let all the Gods and Goddesses, saith he, destroy me
omnesque worse than at this very time I feel myself to perish, &c.
perdant in which saying, the words, *destroy* and *perish*, are
quam hodie both of them us'd to express the miserable anguish
perire me and torment which at that time he felt in his mind,
sentio, &c. as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

And

And as for the word Death; a state of misery SERM. which is as bad or worse than Death may properly XXXV. enough be call'd by that name: And for this reason the punishment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the *Revelation* so frequently and fitly call'd *the second death*. And *the lake of fire*, Rev. 20. 14. into which the wicked shall be cast to be tormented in it, is expressly call'd *the second death*.

But besides this, they that argue from the force of these words, that the punishment of wicked men in the other world shall be nothing else but an utter end of their Being, do necessarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

First, That hereby they exclude all positive punishment and torment of Sinners. For if *the second death*, and to be destroy'd, and to *perish*, signify nothing else but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful *Sentence* which shall be pass'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenor of *Scripture*, which doth so often describe the punishment of wicked men in Hell by positive torments: And particularly our blessed *Saviour*, describing the lamentable state of the damned in Hell, expressly says, that *there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; which cannot be, if *Annihilation* be all the meaning and effect of the *Sentence* of the great Day.

Secondly, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the punishment of Sinners in the other world, then the punishment of all Sinners must of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this also is most directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already shewn.

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I know very well that some who are of this opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they must not argue this from the force of the Words before-mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that Annihilation is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next Life: And if that be not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in *Scripture* they can find the least ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked men shall at last end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot see what great Comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in *Annihilation* and the utter Extinctions of their Beings.

Thirdly, We may consider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punish'd, but that they may not sin, and so may escape the punishment threatned. And therefore the higher the Threatning runs, so much the more Mercy and Goodness there is in it; because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

Fourthly, Let it be considered likewise, that when it is so very plain that God hath threatned eternal misery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earnest, and will execute these threatnings upon them, if they will obstinately stand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reason we ought so to demean our selves, and so to persuade others, as knowing the

terror

terror of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

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Fifth and last place, that if we suppose that God did intend that his threatnings should have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagined that in the same Revelation which declares these Threatnings, any Intimation should be given of the Abatement or Non-execution of them. For by this God would have weakned his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his Threatnings: Because a Threatning hath quite lost its force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And consequently it would be a very impious design to go about to teach or persuade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying Men into that Misery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the Terrors of the Lord. Not so, as saucily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, he may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and exprefs Threatning of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we still go on to treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far, God will execute his Threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very solicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that he, *who is holy in all his ways, and*
righteous

SERM. *righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that he will certainly so manage things at the Judgment of the great Day, *as to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged*. For notwithstanding his Threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own Hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may rest assured, that he will judge the world in righteousness; and if it be any wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which he knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable for ever, that he will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Punishment which he could not execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it; and always to remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's Threatnings; and that nothing will more justify the Infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish Presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling*; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly severe, that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This God heartily desires we would do; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*. So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the Assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this Misery upon us. And both these, I'm sure, are Arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more than to warn us of this Misery, and earnestly persuade us to prevent

vent it ; and to threaten us so very terribly on purpose to deter us from so great a danger? SERM.
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And if this will not prevail with us, but we will go still on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance* ; what in reason remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume us* ? And what almost can Justice, or even Goodness itself do less, than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with Eyes open we would wilfully run upon ; and which no Warning, no Persuasion, no Importunity could prevail with us to avoid ? And when, as the *Apostle* says, *knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death* ; yet for all that we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us Life and Death, eternal Happiness and Misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune : And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this Happiness, and wilfully run upon this Misery, *Wo unto us ! for we have rewarded evil to our selves.*

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Punishment the just God hath threatned to the Workers of Iniquity ; and that in as plain Words as can be used to express any thing. *These, that is, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*

Here are *Life* and *Death*, Happiness and Misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life ; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible Consequences of it : But an eternal Life, and
an

SERM. an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render
 XXXV. Life pleasant and happy; and a perpetual Death,
 which will for ever torment us, but never make an
 end of us.

These God propounds to our choice: And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our Sins, and to reform our Lives, what will? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the Understanding of Man, *than everlasting Punishment, and Life eternal*; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now, considering in what terms the threatnings of the Gospel are express'd, we have all the reason in the World to believe that the punishment of Sinners in another World will be everlasting. However, we cannot be certain on the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there and find it by experience how it is: And if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being discharged out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a Comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a Matter of mighty Consolation, that they shall be miserable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment of things? No consideration and care of themselves, no concernment for their own last Interest and Happiness?

Origen, I know not for what good reason is said, to have been of opinion, That the punishment of Devils

Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judg-^{SERM.}ment, will continue but for a thousand Years: And ^{XXXV.}that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly persuade my self, that so wise and learned a Man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise term of a thousand Years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thousand Years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatened in the Gospel: I say, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiser to take care to avoid it, than to dispute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, especially if we put it at the worst, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all possible means to be provided against: So terrible, so intolerable is the thought, yea the very least suspicion of being miserable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask you, as *St. Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may answer for you my self as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them these things are clearly revealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a solemn Profession every day.

And yet when we consider how most Men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour*, and our *Judge*, That *the wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our Belief with our Actions, we must either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we must change our Lives.

Let

SERM. Let us then *consider, and shew our selves men.*
 XXXV. And if we do so, can any Man to please himself
 for a little while be contented to be punished for ever; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next World?

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our Minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of Sin and Vice: Because they bid us to infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short Pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the Scales against any Pleasure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly, when *we know the terrors of the Lord*, and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loss of our immortal Souls, and by *suffering the vengeance of eternal Fire*?

What is it then that can give Men the *Heart and Courage*; but I recal that Word because it is not true *Courage*, but *fool-hardiness*, thus to out-brave the Judgment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable Eternity? How is it possible that Men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their Minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet Hour, whilst
 so

So great a Danger hangs over their Heads, and they SERM.
have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we XXXV.
have any true and just Sense of this Danger, we cannot
fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to
escape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which
is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be
Happy or Miserable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate or measure things as
they appear now to our sensual and deluded and de-
prav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and
look to the last issue and consequence of them: Let
us often think of these things and consider well with
our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill
and possess our minds, when we shall stand trem-
bling before our Judge, in a fearful expectation of
that terrible Sentence which is just ready to be pro-
nounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounced, to be
executed upon us: When we shall have a full and
clear sight of the unspeakable Happiness, and of
the horrible and astonishing Miseries of another
World: When there shall be no longer any veil of
Flesh and Sense to interpose between them and us,
and to hide these things from our eyes: And, in a
Word, when Heaven with all the Glories of it, shall
be open to our view: and, as the expression is in *Job*,
*Hell shall be naked before us, and Destruction shall have
no covering.*

How shall we then be confounded, to find the
truth and reality of those things which we will not
now be persuaded to believe? And how shall we
then wish, that we had believed *the terrors of the
Lord*; and instead of quarrelling with the Princi-
ples of Religion, and calling them into question,
we had lived under the constant sense and awe of
them?

Blessed be God, that there is yet *hope concerning
us*, and that we may yet *flee from the wrath to come*;
and that the Miseries of Eternity may yet be pre-
vented

SERM. vented in Time : And that for this very end and
 XXXV. purpose, our most gracious and merciful God hath
 so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a desire to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

I will conclude all with the Counsel of the *Wise Man* ; Wisdom of *Solomon*, *ch. 1. v. 12, 13, 16.* *Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your selves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the Living ; But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themselves.* Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ* : To whom, with Thee, O Father, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever, *Amen.*

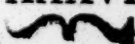
SERMON XXXVI.

Success not always answerable to the probability of Second Causes.

Being a Fast-Sermon preach'd before the House of Commons, on Wednesday, April, 16. 1690.

X ECCLES. ix. 11.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battel to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.

NEXT to the acknowledgment of God's SERM.
 Being, nothing is more essential to Reli-XXXVI
 gion, than the Belief of his Providence, 
 and a constant dependance upon him, as
 the great Governor of the World, and the wise
 Disposer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the
 Children of Men: And nothing can be a greater
 Argument of Providence, than that there is such
 an order of Causes laid in Nature, that in ordinary
 Course every thing does usually attain its end: And
 yet that there is such a mixture of Contingency, as
 that now and then, we cannot tell how nor why, the
 most likely Causes do deceive us, and fail of produ-
 cing their usual effects.

SERM. For if there be a God and a Providence, it is
 XXXVI reasonable that things should be thus: Because a
 Providence does suppose all things to have been at
 first wisely fram'd, and with a fitness to attain their
 end: But yet it does also suppose that God hath reserv'd to himself a Power and Liberty to interpose and to cross as he pleases, the usual Course of Things; to awaken Men to the consideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to ascribe those things to his wise disposal, which, if we never saw any change, we should be apt to impute to blind necessity. And therefore the *Wise-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had observed things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Causes, yet sometimes they fall out quite otherwise: *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

The connection of which Words, with the foregoing Discourse, is briefly this. Among many other Observations which the *Wise Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the mistakes of Men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verse* before it, of two extremes of human Life: Some, because of the uncertainty of all worldly things, cast off all care and diligence, and neglect the use of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when Men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are disappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely so much upon their own skill and industry, as to promise success to themselves in all their undertakings; and presume so much upon Second Causes, as if no consideration at all were to be had of the First.

The

The *Wise Preacher* reproveth both these extremes, SERMON. and shews the folly and vanity of them. On the XXXVI one hand, of those who sit still, and will use no care and endeavour, because it may all happen to be disappointed, and to fail of Success: Not considering, that though prudent Care and Diligence will not always do the business, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary Course of Things; and that in the order of Second Causes these are the most likely and effectual means to any end: And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counsels Men, whatever they propose to themselves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the use of proper means for the attainment of it; in the *Verse* immediately before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he observes also, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they who manage their Affairs with great Wisdom and Industry, are apt to presume and reckon upon the certain success of them, without taking into consideration that which in all human Affairs is most considerable, the favour and blessing of that Almighty and Wise Providence which rules the World; *I returned*, says he, *and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.*

I returned and saw, that is, having considered on the one hand the folly of sloth and carelessness, I turned mine eyes the other way, and saw as great an error on the other hand; in Men's presuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence of God. For I have found, says *Solomon*, by manifold observations, That the Success of Things does not always answer the probability of Second Causes and Means. So that the Sum of the *Preacher's* advice is this: When thou propoudest any end to thyself, be diligent and vigorous in the use of Means; and when thou hast done all, look above and beyond these

SERM. these to a Superior Cause which over-rules, and
 XXXVI steers, and stops as he pleases, all the motions and
 activity of Second Causes: And be not confident
 that all things are ever so wisely and firmly laid, that
 they cannot fail of Success. For the Providence of
 God doth many times step in to divert the most probable
 event of things, and to turn it quite another
 way: And whenever he pleaseth to do so, the
 most strong and likely means do fall lame, or
 stumble, or by some accident or other come short of
 their end.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that is, here below, in this inferior World.

That the race is not to the swift: This the *Chaldee Paraphrast* does understand with relation to warlike Affairs. *I beheld, says he, and saw, that they who are swift as eagles do not always escape in the day of bat-tel.* But I chuse rather to understand the Words in their more obvious sense, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is swiftest from winning it.

Nor the battel to the strong; that is, Victory and Success in War do not always attend the greatest force and preparations, nor doth that side which in human estimation is strongest always prevail and get the better.

Nor yet bread to the wise; *Neque doctorum panem esse*, so some render the Words, that learned Men are not always secured against Poverty and Want.

Nor yet riches to men of understanding; for so some *Interpreters* translate the Words, *Neque industriis divitias esse*, that those who take most pains do not always get the greatest Estates.

Nor yet favour to men of skill; that is, to those who understand Men and business, and how to apply themselves dextrously to the inclinations and interests of Princes and Great Men. Others interpret these Words more generally, *Neque peritorum arti-*

ficum

scum esse gratiam, that those who excel most in SERM. their several Arts and Professions do not always XXXVI meet with suitable encouragement: But because the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is so frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former sense seems to be more easy and natural.

But time and chance happeneth to them all; that is, saith *Aben Ezra*, there is a secret Providence of God which sometimes presents men with unexpected opportunities, and interposeth accidents which no human wisdom could foresee. Which gives success to very unlikely means, and defeats the swift, and the strong, and the learned, and the industrious, and them that are best vers'd in men and business, of their several ends and designs.

It sometimes happens, that he that is *swiftest*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by some other unlucky accident may lose the Race.

It sometimes falls out, that a much smaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a pass; by a stratagem, or by a sudden surprize, or by some other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in comparison, by favour, or friends, or by some happy chance of setting out to the best advantage the little learning he has, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the same time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to starve.

And that men of no great parts and industry may stumble into an estate, and by some casual hit in Trade may attain such a Fortune, as the man that hath toil'd and drudg'd all his life shall never be able to reach.

And *Lastly*, That a man of no great ambition or design may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, some soft and lucky season of address, may slide into his Prince's favour, and all on the sudden be hoisted up

SERM. to that degree of dignity and esteem, as the design-
 XXXVI ing Man who hath been laying Trains to blow up his
 ~~~~~ Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to  
 worm others out, and to skrew himself in, shall  
 never be able to attain.

The Words thus explain'd contain this general  
 Proposition, which shall be the subject of my follow-  
 ing Discourse.

*That in human affairs the most likely means do not  
 always attain their end, nor does the event constantly  
 answer the probability of second causes ; but there is a  
 secret Providence which governs and over-rules all  
 things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat  
 the most hopeful and probable designs.*

In the handling of this Proposition I shall do  
 these three things.

*First*, I shall confirm and illustrate the truth of it,  
 by an Induction of the Particulars which are instan-  
 ced in, here in the *Text*.

*Secondly*, I shall give some reason and account of  
 this, why the Providence of God doth sometimes  
 interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable de-  
 signs.

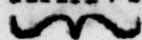
*Thirdly*, I shall draw some Inferences from the  
 whole, suitable to the occasion of this Day. In all  
 which I shall endeavour to be as brief as convenient-  
 ly I can.

*First*, For the confirmation and Illustration of this  
 Proposition, *That the most likely means do not always  
 attain their end ; but there is a secret Providence which  
 over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it  
 pleases, interpose to defeat the most probable and hope-  
 ful designs.* This is the general Conclusion which  
*Solomon* proves by this Induction of Particulars in  
 the *Text*. And he instanceth in the most probable  
 means for the compassing of the several ends which  
 most men in this World propose to themselves. And  
 the great darlings of mankind are *Victory, Riches,*  
 and *Honour* : I do not mention *Pleasure*, because  
 that

that seems rather to result from the use and enjoy-  
ment of the other. Now if a Man design *Victory*,  
what more probable means to overcome in a Race  
than swiftness? What more likely to prevail in War  
than strength? If a man aim at Riches, what more  
proper to raise an Estate than understanding and  
industry? If a man aspire to Honour, what more  
likely to prefer him to the King's favour and service  
than dexterity and skill in business? And yet expe-  
rience shews that these means, as probable as they  
seem to be, are not always successful for the accom-  
plishment of their several ends.

Or else we may suppose that *Solomon* by these In-  
stances did intend to represent the chief engines  
and instruments of human designs and actions. Now  
there are *five* things more especially, which do emi-  
nently qualify a man for any undertaking; expedi-  
tion and quickness of dispatch, strength and force,  
providence and forecast, diligence and industry,  
knowledge and insight into men and business: And  
some think that *Solomon* did intend to represent these  
several qualities by the several instances in the *Text*.  
*The Race is not to the swift*, that is, men of the  
greatest expedition and dispatch do not always  
succeed: For we see that men do sometimes out-run  
business, and make haste to be undone. *Nor the  
battle to the strong*, that is, neither does force and  
strength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wise*;  
which some understand of the provident care and  
pains of the Husbandmen, whose harvest is not al-  
ways answerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet  
riches to men of understanding*, or industry; that is,  
neither is diligence in business always crown'd with  
success. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither  
have they that have the greatest dexterity in the ma-  
nagement of affairs always the fortune to rise. And  
if we take the words in this sense, the thing will  
come much to one: But I rather approve the first

SERM. interpretation, as being less forc'd and nearer to  
XXXVI the Letter.



So that the force of *Solomon's* reasoning is this; If the swiftest do not always win the race; nor the strongest always overcome in War; If knowledge and learning do not always secure men from want; nor industry always make men rich; nor political skill always raise men to high place: nor any other means, that can be instanced in as most probable, do constantly and infallibly succeed: then it must be acknowledg'd that there is some other Cause which mingles it self with human affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleases, defeat the most likely, and bring to pass the most improbable designs: And what else can that be imagined to be, but the secret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God? when we can find no other, we are very unreasonable if we will not admit this to be the Cause of such extraordinary events, but will obstinately impute that to blind Necessity or Chance which hath such plain Characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wisdom.

I might be large upon every one of those Instances in the *Text*, and illustrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Histories. But I shall briefly pass over all of them, but the *second*, *The battle is not to the strong*.

*The race is not to the swift*. If we understand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may snatch Victory from the swiftest runner. If we understand it as the *Chaldee Paraphrase* does, with relation to War, that the swiftest does not always overcome or escape in the day of Battle; of this *Asabel* is an eminent Instance, who though he was, as the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not escape the Spear of *Abner*. It seems that among the *Ancients*, swiftness was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warrior, both

because



because it serves for a sudden assault and onset, SERM.  
 and likewise for that which in civility we call a XXXVI  
 nimble retreat. And therefore *David*, in his Poetical  
*Lamentation* over those two great Captains, *Saul*  
 and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike  
 quality of theirs; *They were*, says he, *swifter than*  
*Eagles, stronger than Lions*: And the constant Cha-  
 racter which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his  
 principal *Heroes*, is that *he was swift of foot*: The  
*Poet* feigns of him, that by some charm or gift of  
 the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his Body  
 except his heel: And *that* was the part to which he  
 trusted; and in that he received his mortal wound:  
 The wise Poet hereby instructing us, that many  
 times our great danger lies there, where we place  
 our chief confidence and safety.

*Nor yet bread to the wise, or to the learned.* The  
 Poverty of *Poets* is Proverbial; and there are frequent  
 instances in History of eminently learned persons  
 that have been reduced to great straits and necessi-  
 ties.

*Nor yet riches to men of understanding*: By which,  
 whether we understand men of great parts, or of  
 great diligence and industry; it is obvious to every  
 man's observation, that an ordinary capacity and  
 understanding does usually lye more level to the busi-  
 ness of a common Trade and Profession, than more  
 refin'd and elevated parts; which lye rather for spe-  
 culation than practice, and are better fitted for the  
 pleasure and ornament of conversation, than for the  
 toil and drudgery of business: As a fine Razor is ad-  
 mirable for cutting hairs, but the dull hatchet much  
 more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of  
 Timber. And even when parts and Industry meet  
 together, they are many times less successful in the  
 raising a great Estate, than men of much lower and  
 slower understandings: because these are apt to ad-  
 mire riches, which is a great spur to industry; and  
 because they are perpetually intent upon one thing,  
 and

SERM. and mind but one business, from which their  
 XXXVI thoughts never straggle into vain and useless enquiries  
 after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs; all  
 which being foreign to their business, they leave to  
 those who are, as they are wont to say of them in  
 scorn, more curious, and too wise to be rich.

*Nor yet favour to men of skill.* All History is full  
 of Instances of the casual advancement of men to  
 great favour and honour, when others, who have  
 made it their serious study and business, have fallen  
 short of it. I could give a famous Example in this  
 kind, of the manifold and manifest disappointment  
 of a whole Order of men: the slyest and most subtle,  
*in their generation, of all the children of this world;*  
 the most politically instituted, and the best studied  
 and skill'd in the tempers and interests of men; the  
 most pragmatikal, and cunning to insinuate them-  
 selves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Fami-  
 lies: and who, by long experience, and an univer-  
 sal intelligence, and communicated observations,  
 have reduced human affairs, at least as they think,  
 to a certain Art and Method, and to the most steady  
 Rules that such contingent things are capable of: I  
 believe you all guess before-hand whom I mean, e-  
 ven the *honest Jesuits*: And yet these men of so much  
 Art and Skill have met with as many checks and  
 disappointments, as any sort of men ever did: They  
 have been discountenanc'd by almost all Princes and  
 States, and, one time or other, banish'd out of most  
 of the Courts and Countries of *Europe*. And it is no  
 small argument of the Divine Providence, that so  
 much cunning hath met with so little countenance  
 and success; and hath been so often, so grossly infa-  
 tuated, and their *counsels turn'd into foolishness*.

But I promis'd only to mention these, and to in-  
 sist upon the second Instance in the Text, *I return'd,*  
*and saw under the Sun, that the battle is not to the*  
*strong,* to the *Gibborim*, the *Gyants*, for so the *He-*  
*brew* word signifies; in which *Solomon* might possi-  
 bly

bly have respect to the History of the *Israelites* sub-SERM. duing the *Canaanites*, a People of great strength XXXVI and stature, among whom were the *Gyants*, the *Sons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliath*: But however that be, the *Scripture* is full of Examples to this purpose; that when the Providence of God is pleas'd to interpose in favour of any side, it becomes victorious; according the saying of King *Asa* in his Prayer to God, 2 *Chron.* 14. 11. *it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with those that have no power.*

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles. Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his Host in the *Red Sea*; and the *Stars* fighting in their courses against *Sisera*; by which poetical expression I suppose is meant *Sisera's* being remarkably defeated by a visible Hand from Heaven: And such was the destruction of the proud King of *Assyria's* Army by an Angel, who slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more human ways; by striking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and sometimes by putting extraordinary spirits and courage into the weaker side, so that *an hundred shall chase a thousand, and a thousand shall put ten thousand to flight.*

This made *David* so frequently to acknowledge the Providence of God, especially in the Affairs of War. *Psal.* 33. 16. *There is no King saved by the multitude of an host, neither is a mighty man deliver'd by much strength.* And again, *Psal.* 44. 6. *I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* And *Solomon* confirms the same observation, *There is no wisdom, says he, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety, or, as some Translations render it, Prov.* 21. 30, 31. *Victory is of the Lord. Gideon,*  
by



SERM. by a very odd stratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers*, de-  
 XXXVI feated a very numerous Army, only with three  
 hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer*, by  
 climbing up a *Rock*, and coming suddenly on the  
 back of the *Philistines* Camp, struck them with such  
 a terror as put their whole Army to flight. King  
*Asa*, with a much inferior number, defeated that  
 huge *Æthiopian* Army which consisted of a *Million*.  
 And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army over-  
 thrown, almost by a handful of *Grecians*? And to  
 come nearer to ourselves, how was that formidable  
 Fleet of the *Spaniards*, which they presumptuously  
 call'd *invincible*, shatter'd and broken in pieces,  
 chiefly by the *Winds* and the *Sea*? So many accidents  
 are there, especially in *War*, whereby the *Divine*  
*Providence* doth sometimes interpose and give *Victory*  
 to the weaker side.

And this hath been so apparent in all *Ages*, that  
 even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the  
 Affairs of *War*, a special interposition of *Fortune*,  
 by which the wiser among them did understand the  
*Divine Providence*. *Plutarch* speaking of the *Ro-*  
*mans*, says, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very same  
 with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the *Text*, did  
 lay the foundation of their *Greatness*, by which he a-  
 scribes the success to a remarkable *Providence* of  
 God concurring with several happy *Opportunities*.

And *Livy* their great *Historian*, hath this remark-  
 able observation, That in all human affairs, especial-  
 ly in matters of *War*, *Fortune* hath a mighty stroke.  
 And again, *No where*, says he, is the event less an-  
 swerable to expectation than in *War*; and therefore no-  
 thing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not  
 turn the Scales in a great matter. And *Cæsar* him-  
 self, who was perhaps the most skilful and prospe-  
 rous Warrior that ever was, makes the same ac-  
 knowledgment; As in all other things, says he, so  
 particularly in *War*, *Fortune* hath a huge sway. And  
*Plutarch* observes, That there was no Temple at  
 Rome

Rome dedicated to *Wisdom* or *Valour*, but a most SERM. magnificent and stately one to *Fortune*; signifying XXXVI hereby, that they did ascribe their success infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now in the

*Second* place to give some reason and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth sometimes thus interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of this Providence, and of their dependance upon Him, and subordination to him; and that He is the great Governor of the World, and *rules in the Kingdoms of men*; and that *all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to him*, and the power of the Second Causes inconsiderable: That *He doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?*

God hath so ordered things, in the Administration of the Affairs of the World, as to encourage the use of means; and yet so, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and success of them: To encourage Industry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural course, and to fall out according to the power and probability of second Causes.

But then, least men should cast off Religion, and *deny the God that is above*, lest they should *trust in their sword and their bow, and say, the Lord hath not done this*; lest men should look upon themselves as the Creators and Framers of their own Fortune, and when they do but a little outstrip others in wisdom or power, in the skill and conduct of human affairs, they should grow proud and presumptuous, God is pleased sometimes more remarkably to interpose, *to bide pride from man*, as the expression is in *Job*; to check the haughtiness and insolence of mens Spirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modesty and humility; to make us to know *that we are but men,*

SERM. *men*, and that the reins of the World are not in our XXXVI hands, but that there is *One* above who sways and governs all things here below.

And indeed if we should suppose, in the first frame of things which we call *Nature*, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a constant course, according to the power and force of second Causes, without any interposition of providence to stop, or alter that course, upon any occasion: In this case, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but especially of Prayer to God, would be quite taken away: Upon this supposition it would be the vainest thing in the World to pray to God for the good Success of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a settled and establish'd course; then instead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the best provision and preparation we can for the effecting of what we desire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counsel and consideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently suppose, that the Providence of God does frequently interpose to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in human probability they seem'd to tend.

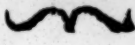
So that it is every whit as necessary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that he governs the World, and does when he pleases interpose in the affairs of it, as that he made it at first. I come now in the

*Third* and last place, to make some Inferences suitable to the Occasion of this Day, from what hath been said upon this Argument: And they shall be these.

*First*, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time spent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to him for his Blessing upon our endeavours,

to



to be any hindrance to our Affairs. For after we <sup>SERM.</sup> have done all we can, the event is still in God's hand, <sup>XXXVI</sup> and rests upon the disposal of his Providence. 

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themselves so carelessly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we see too many do; they would not look upon every Hour that is spent in Devotion, as lost from their Business.

If men would but take a view of what hath happen'd to them in the course of a long Life, I believe most of us would see reason to acknowledge, that our Prosperity and Success in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undesign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecast and conduct.

And if this were well consider'd by us, we should not methinks be so apt to leave God out of our counsels and undertakings, as if he were a meer Name and Cypher in the World. It is I am sure, the advice of one that was much wiser and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean *Solomon. Prov. 3. 5, 6. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths: Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil.* There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, that to live under a constant sense and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to seek his favour and blessing upon all our designs, being fearful to offend him, and careful to please him, is a much nearer and surer way to Success, than our own best Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore, at such a time, more especially, when we are going to War, or engaged in it, we should break off our sins by repentance and the sincere resolution of a better course: We should earnestly

SERM. ly implore the blessing of God upon our undertak-  
 XXXVI kings; and not only take great care that our Cause  
 be just, but likewise that there be *no wicked thing* amongst us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accursed thing*, that may provoke him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to the Jews, *Deut. 23. 9. When thou goest forth against thine enemy, then keep thyself from every wicked thing; then, that is, more especially at such a time.*

And this is a necessary caution, not only to those who are personally engaged in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the day of Battle, or if God shall suffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cause, but of a good Conscience, void of Offence towards God and Men.

But this Caution likewise concerns those, who are interested in the success and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Estates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Consciences; which are now every whit as much at stake as our civil Interests and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of these, we should be very careful to *keep our selves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us, may not for our sins, and for our sakes, turn their backs in the day of Battle, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

2dly, From hence we may likewise learn, so to use the means as still to depend upon God; who can, as he pleases, bless the Counsels and Endeavours of Men, or blast them and make them of none effect. For as God hath promised nothing but to a wise and diligent use of means, so all our prudence, and industry, and most careful preparations may miscarry, if he do not favour our design: For without Him

Him nothing is wise, nothing is strong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end. SERM. XXXVI

We should indeed use the means as vigorously, as if God did nothing; and when we have done so, we should depend upon God for the success of those means, as if we our selves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and blessing: For when all is done, we are only safe under his Protection, and sure of success from his Blessing.

For whatever vain and foolish men may say in their hearts, *there is, there is a God*, that made the World, and administers the affairs of it with great Wisdom and Goodness; else how came any of us into being, or what do we here? Did we not most assuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and super-intends human affairs; the first wish of a wise man would be, to steal out of Being, if he could; and that the same Chance of Necessity that brought him into the World, would take the first opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to present, and great and certain Evils; and to have no security against the continuance of them, or the return of the same or worse Evils; nor to have any assurance of a better and more durable state of rest and happiness hereafter, is in truth so very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any consideration in the World that is of force and power enough to support the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiser, and better, and more powerful than our selves, and that keeps things from running into endless confusion and disorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly consider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we suffer upon his account. I do not see what reason any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wish the continuance of it for one moment.



SERM. *Thirdly* and lastly, the consideration of what hath  
 XXXVI been said upon this Argument, should keep us from  
 being too sanguine and confident of the most likely  
 designs and undertakings; because these do not al-  
 ways answer the probability of second Causes of means;  
 and never less, than when we do with the greatest  
 confidence rely upon them; when we promise most  
 to our selves from them, then are they most likely to  
 deceive us: They are as the Prophet compares them,  
 like a *broken reed*, which a man may walk with in his  
 hand, whilst he lays no great stress upon it; but if  
 he trust to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it  
 will not only fail him, but even *pierce him through*.

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our af-  
 fairs, when they are in the most hopeful and likely  
 condition to succeed and do well, than to shut God  
 and his Providence out of our counsels and considera-  
 tion. When we pass God by, and take no notice of  
 Him, but will rely upon our own wisdom and  
 strength, we provoke him to leave us *in the Hands of*  
*our own counsel*, and to let us see what weak and  
 foolish Creatures we are: And a man is never in  
 greater danger of drowning, than when he clasps  
 his Arms closest about himself: Besides, that God  
 loves to resist the self-confident and presumptuous,  
 and to *scatter the proud in the imagination of their*  
*hearts*.

And as in all our concernments we ought to have  
 a great regard to God, the supreme disposer of all  
 things, and earnestly to seek his favour and blessing  
 upon all our undertakings, so more especially in  
 the affairs of War; in which the providence of God  
 is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to  
 interpose and interest it self: And there is great rea-  
 son to think he does so; because all War is, as it were,  
 an Appeal to God, and a reference of those Causes to  
 the decision of his Providence, which through the  
 Pride and Injustice, and perverse Passions of men  
 can receive no other determination.

And

And here God loves to shew himself, and in an enemy-<sup>SERM.</sup>  
 nent manner to take part with Right and Justice a-<sup>XXXVI</sup>  
 gainst those mighty oppressors of the Earth, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this case, the Providence of God is sometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to One that vainly gives out himself *not unequal to the whole World*, by very weak and contemptible means; and, as the *Apostle* elegantly expresseth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are*: And to say to Him, as God once did to the proud King of *Assyria*: *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy one of Israel. Hast thou not heard long ago, that I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps: Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded, &c. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me: Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook into thine nose, and my bridle into thine lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest*——*The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.* Isa. 37. 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32.

But more especially, in vindication of his oppressed Truth and Religion, and in the great and signal Deliverances of his Church and People, God is wont to take the conduct of Affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by human rules and measure: He then bids second Causes to stand by, that *his own arm may be seen, and his salvation may appear*: He raiseth the spirit of men above their natural pitch, and giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength, as the *Prophet* expresseth it.

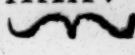
Thus hath the Providence of God very visibly appear'd in our late Deliverance; in such a manner,

SERM. as I know not whether He ever did for any other  
 XXXVI Nation, except the People of *Israel*, when he delivered them *from the house of bondage by so mighty a hand and so outstretched an arm*: And yet too many among us, I speak it this day to our shame, do not seem to have the least sense of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was so visible in it; but like the Children of *Israel*, when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are all full of *murmurings* and discontent against God the Author, and his Servant the happy Instrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the *Prophet* says of *that* People, may I fear be too justly apply'd to us, *Isa.* 26. 10, 11. *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord: Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed*: And I hope I may add that which follows in the next verse, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works for us*.

What God hath already done for our Deliverance is, I hope an earnest that He will carry it on to a perfect Peace and Settlement; and this notwithstanding our high Provocations and horrible Ingratitude to *the God of our Life, and of our Salvation*.

And whenever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpose in human Affairs, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*: For which reason *their Majesties*, in their great Piety and Wisdom, and from a just sense of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to set apart this Day for solemn Repentance and Humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, and which are of all other our greatest and most dangerous Enemies, may not separate between God and us, and hinder good things from

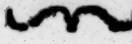


from us, and cover us with confusion in the day of SERM.  
our danger and distress: and likewise earnestly to XXXV  
implore the Favour and Blessing of Almighty God   
upon *their Majesties* Forces and Preparations by  
Sea and Land: And more particularly, for the  
preservation of *his Majesty's* Sacred Person, upon  
whom so much depends, and who is contented again  
to hazard Himself to save us.

To conclude; There is no such way to engage the  
Providence of God for us, as by real Repentance  
and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our  
several Places from the highest to the lowest, by the  
provision of wise and effectual Laws for the discour-  
tenancing and suppressing of Profaneness and Vice,  
and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the  
more kindly and powerful influence of a good Exam-  
ple, to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nati-  
on: For without this, whatever we may think of  
the firmness of our present Settlement, we cannot  
long be upon good terms with almighty God, upon  
whose favour depends the prosperity and stabili-  
ty of the future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and  
that is, to stir up your Charity towards the Poor;  
which is likewise a great part of the Duty of this  
Day, and which ought always to accompany our  
Prayers and Fastings; *Thy Prayers and thine Alms,*  
*saith the Angel to Cornelius, are come up before God:*  
And therefore if we desire that our Prayers should  
reach Heaven, and receive a gracious answer from  
God, we must send up our Alms along with them.

And instead of all other Arguments to this pur-  
pose, I shall only recite to you the plain and persua-  
sive Words of God himself, in which he declares  
what kind of Fast is acceptable to him: *Is it such a*  
*Fast as I have chosen? a Day for a man to afflict his*  
*soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, to spread*  
*sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a*  
*Fast, and an acceptable Day to the Lord? Is not this*

SERM. the Fast that I have chosen ? To loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the  
 XXXVI  oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke : Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thine house ; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily ; thy righteousness, or thine Alms shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward : Then shalt thou call, and I will answer thee ; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am.

Now to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain : To God, even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, Unto Him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood ; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God his Father : To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

And the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

# SERMON XXXVII.

The Way to prevent the Ruin of a sinful People.

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Jerem. vi. 8.

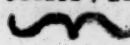
*Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.*

THESE Words are a merciful warning SERM.  
 from God to the People of *Israel* by the XXXVII  
 Prophet *Jeremiah*, the last Prophet that  
 God sent to them before their Captivity in *Babylon*.

The time of his Prophecy was of a long continuance, above the space of forty years, viz. from the thirteenth year of King *Josiah*, to the eleventh year of King *Zedekiah*, the year in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*.

This I observe, to shew the great patience of God to a sinful Nation. And this is much the same space of time that God gave warning by our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles to the same People of the Jews concerning their final Destruction. For it was about forty years after the Prediction of our Saviour concerning it, just before his death, that the terrible Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Jewish Nation was executed upon them by the Romans, or rather chiefly by themselves, as I shall presently shew. Of which dreadful Desolation, the first taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and their Captivity into *Babylon*, was a kind of Type and Forerunner. For as *Josephus* observes, the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus*  
*Vespasian*



SERM. *Vaspasian* did happen in the very same Month, and  
 XXXVII on the very same Day of the Month in which *Jeru-*  
 *salem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, viz. upon our  
 X *tenth* of *August*.

And it is not unworthy of our Observation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold some sort of proportion with the extent of his Judgments. Before the universal Deluge which destroyed the whole World, *Noah* and his Family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of *Noah*, for the space of an *hundred and twenty years*. Before the destruction of a particular Nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the *Jews*, his time of warning is *forty years*. And before the destruction of a particular City, if we may conclude any thing from the single example of *Nineveh*, the time of God's Warning is yet much shorter, the space of *forty days*.

And now to what end doth God exercise so much patience, and threaten so long before hand, but that by the terror of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his Prophet threatens ruin and destruction to the People of *Israel*, he earnestly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might escape the ruin that was denounced against them: This being a condition perpetually implied in the denunciation of publick Judgments, that if a People repent of the evil of their doings, God also will repent of the evil which he said he would do unto them, as he expressly declares, *chap. 18. vers. 7, 8. At what instant I speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluckup and to pull down and to destroy it, if that Nation against whom I have pronounc'd, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And here in the *Text*, after God had threatned destruction to *Jerusalem*, because of the overflowing of all manner of wickedness and oppression

pression in the midst of her, he gives her a merciful SERM.  
warning to prevent this ruin and desolation by repen- XXXVII  
tance, *ver. 6, 7. Thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew ye*  
*down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: This*  
*is a City to be visited, she is wholly oppression in the*  
*midst of her. As a fountain casteth out waters, so she*  
*casteth out her wickedness. Before me continually is*  
*grief and wounds. And yet when he had pronoun-*  
*ced this fearful Sentence upon her, he tells her that*  
*all this Misery and desolation might yet be prevent-*  
*ed, if they would but hearken to the counsel of*  
*God, and be instructed by him concerning the*  
*things of their peace: For so it follows in the next*  
*words, Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul*  
*depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not*  
*inhabited. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, that is,*  
*do but now at last take that counsel and warning,*  
*which hath so often and so long been tender'd to*  
*thee by my servant the Prophet, who hath now for*  
*the space of forty years continually, and that with*  
*great earnestness and importunity, been warning*  
*thee of this danger and calling thee to repentance and*  
*a better mind.*

*Lest my soul depart from thee.* In the Hebrew it  
is, *Lest my soul be loosened and disjointed from thee,*  
as it is in the margin of your Bibles; hereby signi-  
fying in the most emphatical manner, the wonderful  
affection and kindness which God had for his People,  
and how strongly his soul was link'd to them, and  
how loth he was to withdraw his love from them;  
it was like the tearing off of a limb, or the pluck-  
ing of a joint in sunder; so unwilling is God to come  
to extremity; so hardly is he brought to resolve  
upon the ruin even of a sinful Nation: How much  
rather would he, that they would be instructed and  
receive correction, and hearken to the things of their  
Peace? But if they will not be persuaded, if no  
warning will work upon them, *his spirit will not*  
*always*

SERM. *always strive with them ; but his soul will at last,*  
 XXXVII *though with great unwillingness and reluctance, de-*  
 part from them.

And then, no intercession will prevail for them ; as he threatens by the same Prophet, *Chap. 15. ver. 1. Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this People ; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth ; away with them into Captivity, for they have lost my heart, and no intercession of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.*

And when his Soul is once departed from a People, and his heart turned against them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will be let loose upon them ; as we may read in the next *verse* of that *Chapter : Jer. 15. 2. And it shall come to pass if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth ? Then shalt thou tell them, Thus saith the Lord, Such as are for death to death, and such as are for the sword to the sword, and such as are for the famine to the famine, and such as are for the captivity to the captivity. For then God will be weary of repenting, as he tells them, ver. 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward ; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and deliver thee ; I am weary of repenting.* By our obstinate impenitency we harden the heart of God against us, and make him *weary of repenting.* And when his soul is thus departed from a People, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. *Hos. 9. 12. Wo unto them, saith God by the Prophet, when I depart from them. Therefore be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.*

Having given this account of the Words, I shall observe from them three things well worth our consideration.

*First,*



*First*, The infinite goodness and patience of God SERM. XXXVII towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* How loth is He that things should come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and some kind of violence, as it were, offered to himself, brought to this severe resolution; his soul is, as it were, *rent* and *disjointed* from them.

*Secondly*, You see here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the misery and ruin of a sinful People. If they will be *instructed*, and take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiser and better, then *his soul* will not depart from them, he will not bring upon them the *desolation* which he hath threatned.

*Thirdly*, You have here intimated the miserable case and condition of a People, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when *his soul departs from them*. For when God once leaves them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I shall speak as briefly as I can to these *Three* observations from the *Text*.

*First*, I observe the infinite patience and goodness of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.* How loth is God that things should come to this? He is very patient to particular Persons, notwithstanding their great and innumerable provocations. *God is strong and patient*, though Men *provoke him every day*. And much greater is his patience to whole Nations and great communities of Men.

How great was it to the old World, *when the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah,*  
for

SERM. for the space of an hundred and twenty years?  
 XXXVII And did not expire till *he saw that the wickedness of man*  
 was growing great upon the earth, and that all flesh  
 had corrupted its way; not till it was necessary to  
 drown the World to cleanse it, and to destroy Man-  
 kind to reform it, by beginning a new World upon  
 the only righteous Family that was left of all the last  
 generation of the old. For so God testifies concerning  
*Noah*, when he commanded him to enter into the  
 Ark, saying, Gen. 7. 1. *Come thou and all thy house in-*  
*to the Ark; for thee, that is, thee only, have I seen*  
*righteous before me in this Generation.*

The patience of God was great likewise to *Sodom*  
 and *Gomorrab* and the Cities about them. For  
 when *the cry of their sins had reached heaven*, and  
 called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon  
 them, to express the wonderful patience of God  
 toward such grievous Sinners, though nothing is hid  
 from his sight and knowledge, yet he is represented  
 as coming down from Heaven to Earth on purpose  
 to enquire into the truth of things, and *whether they*  
*were altogether according to the cry that was come up to*  
*him.* And when he found things as bad as was pos-  
 sible, yet then was he willing to have come almost to  
 the lowest terms imaginable, that if there had been  
 but *ten righteous persons* in those wicked Cities, *he would*  
*not have destroyed them for the ten's sake.*

Nay, he seems to come to lower terms yet, with  
 the City of *Jerusalem*, Jer. 5. 1. *Run ye to and*  
*fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now*  
*and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if*  
*ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth*  
*judgment, and seeketh the truth, and I will par-*  
*don it.*

What can be imagin'd more slow, and mild, and  
 merciful, than the proceedings of the Divine Jus-  
 tice against a sinful People? God is represented in  
 Scripture as taking a long time to *make ready his*  
*bow,*

low, and to whet his glittering sword, before his hand takes hold of vengeance; as if the instruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and rusty and unready for use. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good Man will step in and interpose to stay his hand? As we read *Psal. 106. 23.* *Therefore he said, speaking of the People of Israel, that he would destroy them had not Moses his servant stood in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.* And how kindly doth God take it of *Phinebas*, as a most acceptable piece of service done to him, and which he hardly knew how sufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a stop to his anger against the People of *Israel*: Inſomuch that the *Pſalmiſt* tells us, that *it was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations for evermore.* I will recite the whole paſſage at large, becauſe it is remarkable. When the People of *Israel* were ſeduced into Idolatry and Whoredom by the Daughters of *Moab*, *Phinebas* in great zeal ſtood up and executed judgment upon *Zimri* and *Coſbi* in the very act: By which means the Plague which was broken out upon the Congregation of *Israel* was preſently ſtayed. Hear what God ſays to *Moses* concerning this act of *Phinebas*. *The Lord ſpake unto Moses ſaying, Phinebas the Son of Eleazar, the ſon of Aaron the Priest, hath turned away my wrath from the Children of Israel, whiſt he was zealous for my ſake, that I conſumed them not. Wherefore ſay, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of Peace, and he ſhall have it, and his Seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlaſting Priethood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Israel: That which God takes ſo kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for him, is, that he pacified God's wrath towards the Children of Israel.*

And

SERM.  
XXXVII



SERM. And thus did God from time to time deal with  
 XXXVII the People of *Israel*, that great Example of the Old  
 Testament of the merciful methods of the Divine  
 Providence towards a sinful Nation. And an Ex-  
 ample, as *St. Paul* tells us, *1 Cor. 10. 11.* purposely  
*recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the*  
*World are come.*

Let us therefore consider a little the astonishing  
 patience of God towards that perverse People. Af-  
 ter all the signs and wonders which he had wrought  
 in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and for their sup-  
 port in the Wilderness; and notwithstanding their  
 gross and stupid infidelity and horrible ingratitude  
 to God their Saviour, and all their rebellious mur-  
 murings and discontents, yet he suffer'd their man-  
 ners for the space of forty years.

And when they were at last peaceably settled in  
 the promised Land; notwithstanding their frequent  
 relapses into Idolatry, with what patience did God  
 expect their repentance, and the result of all the  
 merciful messages and warnings given them from  
 time to time by his Prophets, as one that earnestly  
 desir'd it, and even long'd for it? *Jer. 4. 14.* O  
*Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou*  
*mayst be saved; how long shall vain thoughts lodge*  
*within thee?* that is, how long wilt thou delude thy  
 self with vain hopes of escaping the judgments of  
 God by any other way than by repentance? And  
 again, *Jer. 13. 27.* O *Jerusalem, wilt thou not be*  
*made clean? when shall it once be?* And *chap. 8. ver.*  
*6.* says God there, *I bearkned and I heard, but they*  
*spake not aright; no man repented him of his wicked-*  
*ness, saying, What have I done?* Where God is re-  
 presented, after the manner of men, waiting with  
 great patience, as one that wou'd have been glad to  
 have heard any penitent word drop from them, to  
 have seen any sign of their repentance and return to  
 a better mind.

And

And when they made some shews of repentance, SERM.  
 and had some fits of good resolution that did pre-XXXVII  
 vently vanish and come to nothing, how passionately  
 does God complain of their fickleness and incon-  
 stancy? *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O*  
*Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is*  
*as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth a-*  
*way.*

And at last, when nothing would do, with what  
 difficulty and reluctance does God deliver them up  
 into the hands of their Enemies? *Hof. 11. 8, 9.*  
*How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deli-*  
*ver thee Judah? How shall I make thee as Admah?*  
*How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned*  
*within me, and my repentings are kindled together; I*  
*will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not*  
*destroy Ephraim.* What a conflict is here? what ten-  
 derness and yearning of his bowels towards them?  
 He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he  
 is forced to it by the last necessity.

And when the Nation of the *Jews*, after their  
 return from the Captivity of *Babylon*, had in the  
 course of several Ages greatly corrupted themselves,  
 and fill'd up the measure of their sins by *crucifying*  
*the Lord of Life and Glory*, yet how slow was the pa-  
 tience of God in bringing that fatal and final De-  
 struction upon them? Not till after the most merci-  
 ful warnings given to them by the *Apostles* of our  
*Lord and Saviour*; not till after the most obstinate  
 impenitency of forty years, under the most powerful  
 means of Repentance that any People in the World  
 ever enjoyed. I proceed to the

*Second Observation from the Text, namely, What*  
*is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the*  
*ruin of a sinful People? And that is, if they will*  
*be instructed and take warning by the Threatnings*  
*of God to become wiser and better, then his soul will*  
*not depart from them, and he will not bring upon*  
*them the desolation threatned. Be thou instructed, O*  
*Jerusalem,*

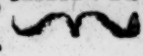
SERM. *Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, and I make*  
 XXXVII *thee desolate, a Land not inhabited;* intimating, or  
 rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive instruction and take warning, the evil threatned shall not come. For what other Reason can there be, why God should threaten so long before he strikes, and so earnestly press men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to spare them, and to shew mercy to them?

And indeed, as I observed before, all the Denunciations and Threatnings of God to a sinful Nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that Nation turn from their evil ways, God will repent of the evil which he thought to do unto them. For God never passeth so irrevocable a Sentence upon a Nation, as to exclude the case of repentance: Nay on the contrary, He gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. *How often would I have gathered thee,* says our merciful Lord when he wept over Jerusalem, *as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not; therefore your House is left unto you desolate.*

God is very merciful to particular Persons upon their repentance. When the *Prodigal Son* in the Parable after all his riot and lewdness came to himself and resolv'd to return home, *his Father seeing him yet afar off* coming towards him, *came out to meet him, and had compassion on him and kissed him.* And can any of us be so obstinate and hard-hearted, as not presently to resolve to repent and return, and to meet the compassions of such a Father? Who, after we have offended him to the uttermost, is upon the first discovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could possibly have been if we had never offended him.

And much more is God ready to receive a Nation upon their sincere Repentance; when his Judgments must needs make great havock, and so many  
 are



are like to suffer under them. This Consideration SERM.  
God urgeth and pleads with his froward Prophet, XXXVII  
in behalf of the great City of Nineveh. *Jonah 4.* 

11. *And shall not I spare that great City of Nineveh, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, who cannot discern their right hand from their left? that is, so many innocent Children, by which we may judge of the vast number of the rest of the Inhabitants. For this is a great Consideration with God in his sending of publick Calamities, the multitude of the Sufferers; and that not only the guilty but the innocent also, without a special and miraculous Providence, must be involved in a common Calamity.*

Sometimes God respites his Judgment upon the mere external humiliation of a People and some formal testimonies and expressions of their repentance. When the People of Israel sought God and enquired early after him, though they they did but flatter him with their mouth and their heart was not right with him, yet the Psalmist tells us, *Psal. 78. that being full of compassion he forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not; that is, he forgave them so far as to respite their ruin.*

And much more will a sincere and effectual Repentance stay God's Hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceness of his anger: Insomuch that after he had fix'd and determin'd the very Day for the Destruction of Nineveh, and had engaged the credit of his Prophet in it, yet as soon as he saw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways, how glad was he to see it? He presently repented of the evil which he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not. In this Case God does not stand upon the reputation of his Prophet, by whom he had sent so peremptory a Message to them; but his Mercy breaks through all considerations and rejoiceth against Judgment: For he cannot find in his heart to ruin those who by the terror of his Judgments will be brought to Repentance.

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And this surely is a mighty motive and encouragement to Repentance, to be assur'd that we shall find Mercy; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the instruments of God's Wrath are fix'd and ready for execution, and his hand is just taken hold of vengeance, yet even then a sincere Repentance will mitigate his hottest displeasure, and turn away his Wrath. And if we will not come in upon these terms, we extort the Judgments of God from him, and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

*Thirdly and lastly, The Text intimates to us the miserable Case and Condition of a People when God takes off his Heart and Affection from them, when he gives over all further Care and Concernment for them, and abandons them to their own Wickedness and Folly, and to the miserable Effects and Consequences thereof: Wo unto them, when his Soul departs from them: For then all sorts of Evils and Calamities will rush in, and wrath will come upon them to the uttermost; as was threatned to the Jews, a little before their final Destruction, and executed upon them in the most terrible and amazing manner, that ever was from the foundation of the World. These, as our Blessed Saviour expresses it, were days of vengeance indeed, that all things which were written, that is, foretold by Moses and the Prophets concerning the fearful end of this perverse and stiff-neck'd People, might be fulfilled.*

And because my Text speaks to Jerusalem, *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited; though this was spoken to Jerusalem before her Captivity into Babylon, yet because this first Captivity was but a faint Type of her last and final Desolation by the Romans, when God's Soul was indeed departed from her, and Judea was left desolate, a Land not inhabited: I shall therefore briefly represent to you the full effect of this Threatning in*  
her

her last final Destruction, when *God's Soul* was, as it SERM.  
were, perfectly *loosen'd* and *disjointed* from her : XXXVII  
That you may see what the fierceness and power of  
God's Anger is, when *he departs from them*, and *wrath*  
*comes upon them to the uttermost*, because they would  
not be *instructed* and *know the time of their visitation*.

Thus it was with the *Jews*, about forty years after the Passion of our *Lord*, whom *with wicked hands they had crucified and slain* : Then was *God's Soul departed from them* : Then darkness and desolation came upon them ; and they were in a far worse condition than a Country would be that is forsaken of the Sun, and left condemn'd to a perpetual Night, in which darkness and disorder, faction and fury do reign and rage ; together with all the fatal consequences of *zeal* and *strife*, which, *St. James* tells us, are *confusion* and *every evil work*. For when God is once gone, all the good and happiness of mankind departs together with him : Then Men fall foul upon one another, divide into Parties and Factions, and execute the vengeance of God upon themselves with their own hands.

Thus it happen'd to the *Jewish Nation*, when the measure of their iniquity was full, and their final ruin was approaching. And that we may know their Fate, and be instructed by it, God provided and preserv'd a faithful Historian on purpose, who was an Eye-witness of all that befel them : I mean *Josephus*, who was personally engaged, and was a considerable Commander in the Wars of the *Jews* with the *Romans*, before the Siege of *Jerusalem*. And during the Siege was present in the *Roman* Camp, and being a *Jew* himself hath transmitted these things to posterity in a most exact and admirable *History*, such as *History*, as no Man that hath the heart and bowels of a Man can read without the greatest pity and astonishment.

In the *Preface* of that lamentable *History* he tells us, *that all the misfortunes and calamities which the*



SERM. *World from the beginning of it had seen, compar'd with*  
 XXXVII *this last Calamity of the Jewish Nation, were but slight*  
 and inconsiderable. He tells us likewise, that their Civil Dissentions were the next and immediate cause of their confusion and ruin.

And this more than once: For when Pompey, about sixty Years before our Saviour's birth, fate down before Jerusalem, he tells us, \* that the Factions and Divisions which they had among themselves were the cause of the taking the City and Temple at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the Heads of their Factions provok'd the Romans, and brought them unwillingly upon them, and at last forced the best natur'd Prince in the World, Titus Vespasian, to that severity which he most earnestly desired by all means to have prevented. And he further tells us, that even before the Siege of Jerusalem, the Cities of Judea had all of them Civil Discords among themselves, and that in every City one part of the Jews fought against another.

And when Jerusalem began to be besieged, What a miserable condition was it in, by the cruelty of the Zealots under the command of John the Son of Giorab? And presently after another Faction arose under Simon, who enter'd into the City with a fresh Force and assaulted the Zealots in the Temple: So that most miserable havock was made between them. And then a third Faction started up under Eleazar, as bad as either of the other: So that infinite almost were the numbers of the People within the City that were barbarously slain by these Seditions.

And what an infatuation was this? When the Enemy was at the Gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole strength and force against one another: When the same courage and fury, which they spent so freely upon themselves, had it been turn'd with the like desperateness and obstinacy

nacy upon the *Romans*, might have endanger'd the whole force of the *Roman* Empire. Once or twice indeed they seem'd to lay aside their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence ; but as soon as the Danger of a present Assault was over, they relaps'd into their former state of intestine Enmity and Dissention, as if that had been their main business, and the preservation of their City against the *Romans* only a work by the bye, and not much to be regarded.

And to add to all their other miseries, they were so blinded by their own rage and madness that they wilfully brought upon themselves an extreme Famine. For as the *Historian* tells us, they themselves set on fire vast stores of Corn and other necessities, sufficient to have serv'd them for many years ; and by this means the City was much sooner reduced, even by a Famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themselves.

This Famine, besides all the other miseries and cruelties which it occasion'd within the City, did force great numbers of them to steal out by night into the *Roman* Camp ; where they met with as cruel but a speedier death. For *Titus*, in hope to reduce them the sooner by terror, order'd all those that came out of the City to be crucified before the Walls. Which order was so severely executed, that for several days five hundred a Day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place crosses in, nor Wood whereof to make them : So that they who once cried out so vehemently against our Saviour, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him*, had enough of it at last, and by the just and most remarkable Judgments of God were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the sad Fate of a sinful People, when God is departed from them ! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their misery increased,

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SERM. so did their Impiety to that degree, that the *Histo-*  
 XXXVII *rian* tells us, *they scorned and mocked at all divine*  
 and *holy things, and derided the Oracles of the Pro-*  
 Lib. 5. c. 2. *phets, esteeming them no better than Fables*; and, in a  
 word, were carried to that extremity of wickedness,  
 as not only to prophane their *Temple* in the highest  
 manner, and to break the *Laws* of their own *Reli-*  
 gion, but even to violate the *Laws* of *Nature* and  
*Humanity* in the grossest *Instances*: which made  
 their *Historian* to give that dismal *Character* of  
 Lib. 6. c. 11. them, *that as he thought no City ever suffered such*  
*things, so no Nation, from the beginning of the World,*  
*did ever so abound in all manner of wickedness and im-*  
*piety*; A certain sign that *God's Soul* was departed  
 from them.

And the same *Historian* afterwards, upon conside-  
 ration of the lamentable state into which their Sedi-  
 tions had brought them, breaks out into this doleful  
 Lib. 7. c. 1. lamentation over them, *O miserable City! what didst*  
*thou suffer from the Romans, though at last they set*  
*thee on fire to purge thee from thy sins, that is to be*  
*compar'd with those miseries which thou hast brought*  
*upon thyself?*

To such a dismal state did things come at last,  
 that, as the same *Historian* relates, *many of the Jews*  
*prayed for the good success of their Enemies, to deliver*  
*them from their civil Dissentions*; the *Calamity* where-  
 of was so great, that their final destruction by the *Ro-*  
*mans* did rather put an end to their misery than increase  
 it.

— *En! quo discordia Gives*  
*Perduxit miseros* —

To conclude this sad Story. It was the *Jews*  
 themselves that by their own folly and dissentions  
 forc'd the *Romans* to this sorrowful Victory over  
 them; for in truth all the remorse and pity was on  
 the *Enemies* side. The *Romans* were little more  
 than



than Spectators in this cruel Tragedy, the *Jews* acted S.E.R.M. it upon themselves: And they only who were arriv'd XXXVII at that prodigious height of impiety and wickedness were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of God upon one another: As if the *Prophet* had foretold this, when he says, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.*

When impiety and wickedness are at their highest pitch in a Nation, then they themselves are the only proper instruments to punish one another. The *Romans* were by far too good and gentle to inflict a suffering upon the *Jews* that was equal to the evil of their doings: None but their own barbarous Selves, who were sunk down into the very lowest degeneracy of human nature, were capable of so much cruelty and inhumanity as was requisite to execute the Judgment of God upon them to that degree which their sins had deserved.

You see, my Brethren, by what hath been said upon this Argument, what were the *Faults*, and what the *Fate* of the *Jewish* Nation. Now *these things*, as the *Apostle* expressly tells us, *were written for our Admonition*, and to the intent that *we upon whom the ends of the World are come* might be instructed by them: *We*, I say, who next to the *Jewish* Nation seem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations of the Earth. We resemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.

But as I intend it not, so God forbid that there should be any just ground for a full and exact Parallel between us; Yet this I must say, that nothing ever came nearer to them than we do in several respects. In our fickleness and inconstancy, in our murmurings and discontents; for we are never pleas'd with what God does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: We resemble them likewise in our horrible prophaneness and infidelity, and in our impiety

SERM. and wickedness of several kinds: in our monstrous  
 XXXVII ingratitude and most unworthy returns to the God  
 of our Salvation: and lastly, in our Factions and  
 Divisions, which were the fatal sign of God's being  
 departed from the *Jews*, and the immediate cause  
 and means of those dismal Calamities which wrought  
 their final Ruin. And how can we chuse but dread  
 lest their Fate should overtake us, the Example of  
 whose Faults and Follies we do in so many things  
 so nearly resemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our  
 Fate, let us apply our selves to the great Duties  
 of this Day; a serious and deep Repentance and  
 Humiliation of our selves before Almighty God for  
 the many and heinous Sins which we in this Nation  
 have been, and still are guilty of, against His Divine  
 Majesty; by our prophaneness and impiety, by our  
 lewdness and luxury, by our oppression and injustice,  
 by our implacable malice and hatred one towards  
 another, and by our senseless divisions and animos-  
 ities one against another, without cause and with-  
 out end: By our Neglect of God's Worship and  
 prophanation of his Holy Day, and by our dread-  
 ful abuse of God's great and glorious Name in those  
 horrid Oaths and Curses and Imprecations which are  
 heard almost day and night in the streets of this  
 great City.

For these and all other our innumerable provoca-  
 tions of the patience and goodness and long suffer-  
 ing of God towards us, let us sadly repent our selves  
 this Day, and *turn unto the Lord with all our hearts,*  
*with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:*  
*And rent our hearts and not our garments, and turn*  
*unto the Lord our God; For he is gracious and merci-*  
*ful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth*  
*him of the evil: And who knoweth if he will return*  
*and repent and leave a blessing behind him? Turn thou*  
*us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned: Take*  
*away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

And

And let us earnestly beg of Him, that he would SERM.  
be pleased to prevent those terrible Judgments and XXXVII  
Calamities which hang over us, and which our sins  
have so justly deserved should fall upon us: And that  
He would perfect that wonderful Deliverance which  
he hath begun for us, and *establisth the thing which he*  
*hath wrought*: That he would bless *Them* whom he  
hath set in Authority over us; and particularly, that  
he would preserve the Person of the *King* in his pre-  
sent Expedition, and crown him with victory and  
good success.

And to our Repentance and Prayers let us add  
our liberal Alms, and according to the counsel given  
by the *Prophet* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us *break off our*  
*sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing*  
*mercy to the poor, if so be it may be a lengthening*  
*of our tranquility.*

We are yet, blessed be God, in the full enjoy-  
ment of Peace and Quiet at home, and of our Re-  
ligion and Civil Liberties. God hath given us two  
excellent Princes sitting on the Throne together,  
and both of the same Religion with the main Body  
of the Nation; and as bright Examples of Piety  
and Goodness as *England* ever saw: And who do  
by all ways and means study and seek the good of  
the People committed to their charge.

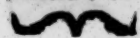
So that if we did but know our own happiness,  
and how to value it, we might be the happiest Peo-  
ple this day under heaven: And yet for all this, we  
are very far from being happy; because we are nei-  
ther contented, nor united; and though we have all  
the materials of Happiness about us, and within our  
reach, yet have we not the skill and wisdom to put  
them together.

Miserable People; that may be happy and will  
not; whom neither so fresh a Deliverance from so  
great a Danger as was just ready to have swallowed  
us up, nor the fear and apprehension of falling again  
into the like confusion, can be a warning to us from  
returning



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returning again unto the same folly : For those odious and unhappy Names of Difference which some Years ago sprang up among us, the Devil knows how, did seem whilst a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried : But no sooner was the danger over, but by a kind of *miraculous* infatuation, behold a sudden *Resurrection* of them, with greater hates and animosities, if possible, than before : Just as it was with the *Jews* in the Siege of *Jerusalem*, when the *Romans* had made a wide breach, and the City was furiously assaulted, the Factions then gave *Truce* to one another, and ran into the common defence ; but as soon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afresh and prosecuted their main design of destroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us also, how like a Fate upon us does it look, that we are soon alter'd from our wiser and better temper ? Did we well and wisely before our late happy Revolution, when we united for our common defence against a common danger, and did let those *unlucky Names* of distinction fall, so that they seem'd to be quite extinguish'd ? And can it be now wise to revive them, and to take them up again ; when the same danger in some degree, and from the same implacable Enemies, still hovers over us ? No surely, it would not be wise, if the danger were quite past and over ; but when it still remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than still to divide and quarrel among our selves ? Will nothing but sad and bitter experience be an admonition to us ? Will nothing but the last necessity and extremity of things bring us to our selves and teach us wisdom ?

Methinks we should all now be glad to be at rest, after the tedious troubles and distractions, the fruitless quarrels and divisions of fifty years. So long I remember ; and in all that space how very few years pass'd over us without some great Calamity and dis-

mal Event. So that by this time one would think SERM.  
we should all be sick of our own follies, and so tir'd XXXVII.  
with our unprofitable feuds and dissensions, as to  
make both sides look about them, to see if any body  
will take pity on us, and step in to part our quar-  
rels.

And now I begin to be sensible, that I have en-  
gag'd in a tender point indeed, and do feel my self  
standing upon a very slippery place. For who is fit  
to interpose in such hot and fierce differences? who  
can do it without danger, or with any hopes of suc-  
cess? And yet for *Zion's sake I will not hold my peace,*  
for *Jerusalem's sake I will not keep silence*: Of so great  
consequence is it to the peace and happiness of this  
Church and Nation, that these Names and distinc-  
tions of Parties should be laid down and abolish'd  
for ever.

In order whereunto I take it for granted and lay  
it for a Principle, that he who hopes to persuade both  
sides must provoke neither: And therefore I will not  
so much as enquire where the fault lies. It is in these  
civil differences as in family-quarrels between Man  
and Wife, if any man ask on which side lies the  
fault; one may almost safely answer at a venture, on  
both sides. It must indeed begin on one, but if it  
be not presently heal'd and made up, the other  
party is always so civil as to run in and take a share of  
the fault, that all the blame may not lie wholly on  
one side.

And now, my brethren, let me for once persuade  
and prevail with you for your good: Let me be so  
happy as to say something that may sink into your  
hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good  
agreement with one another. *Have salt in your  
selves,* says our blessed Saviour, the great *Peace-ma-  
ker, and peace one with another.* By *Salt* is meant  
grace and spiritual wisdom, and if *that* do but rule  
and sway in our hearts, we shall then endeavour, *if  
it be possible, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably  
with*

SERM. *with all men.* If we have salt in our selves, that is, if  
 XXXVII. we be wise, we will then certainly have peace one  
 with another.

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and distracted Nation, we should not then need to fear *all the power of the enemy.* And this our Enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wisdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakness if we suffer our selves to be divided: For who that is wise will take counsel and advice from an Enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our *Jerusalem* would be *as a city that is compact together*, strong and impregnable.

Let us then *be instructed*, and *know*, in this our day, *the things which belong to our peace*, before they be bid from our eyes. And let us earnestly endeavour and pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *They shall prosper that love her*, says the *Psalmist*, and they do not love her, that do not seek her peace and endeavour by all means to procure it: *That peace may be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces*: The one cannot be without the other: without peace there can be no prosperity. And to go on with the words of the *Psalmist*, let every one of us say, yea let us all with one heart and voice say, *for our brethren and companions sake*, for the sake of our *Protestant Brethren* all the World over, let us say, *Peace be within thee: For the house of the Lord our God*, for the sake of our holy Religion, and of that excellent Church whereof we all are, or ought to be Members, let every one of us say, *I will seek thy good.*

And what greater good can we do to the best Religion, how can we better serve the interest of it in all parts of the World, than by being at peace and unity amongst ourselves, here in *England*? upon whom the eyes of all the *Protestants* abroad are fixed, as the Glory of the *Reformation*, and the great bulwark and support of it.

That



That so under the Providence of almighty God, and the conduct of two such excellent Princes as he hath now bless'd us withal: The one so brave and valiant, and both of them so wise, so good, so religious, we may at last arrive at a firm establishment, and become like *mount Zion that cannot be moved*, the perfection of Beauty and Strength, and the admiration and joy of the whole earth; which God of his infinite goodness grant, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise both now and ever. *Amen.*

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## SERMON XXXVIII.

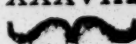
A Conscience void of Offence towards  
God and Men.

*Preached before the QUEEN at  
Whitehall February 27. 169<sup>o</sup><sub>1</sub>.*

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ACTS <sup>IV</sup>XX<sup>II</sup>. 16.

*And herein do I exercise my self, to have al-  
ways a Conscience void of offence towards God,  
and towards Men.*

**T**HESE Words are part of the Defence SERM.  
which St. Paul made for himself before XXXVIII  
*Felix* the Roman Governor. 

In which he first of all vindicates him-  
self from the charge of Sedition, *verse 12. They  
neither found me in the temple, disputing with any man;  
neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogue,  
nor in the City*; that is, they could not charge him with  
making any disturbance either in Church or State.

After

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After this he makes a free and open profession of his Religion, ver. 14. *But this I confess, that after the way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets :* Here he declares the Scriptures to be the Rule of his Faith, in opposition to the Oral Tradition of the Pharisees.

More particularly he asserts the Doctrine of the Resurrection, which was a principal Article both of the Jewish and the Christian Religion, ver. 15. *And I have hope also towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.*

And having made this Declaration of his Faith, he gives an account of his Life in the words of the Text, vers. 16. *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of offence, towards God, and to Rewards Men.*

Herein, *τυ τούτω*, that is, *in this work*, do I employ myself; or as others render it, *in the mean time*, whilst I am in this World; or as others, I think most probably, *for this Cause and Reason*, *ἐν τούτῳ*, for *διὰ τοῦτο*, for this reason, because I believe a Resurrection, therefore have I a conscientious care of my life, and all the actions of it.

The Discourse I intend to make upon these words, shall be comprized in these following particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, *to have a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.*

II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course; to have *always* a Conscience void of offence.

III. Here is his earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, *I exercise myself.*

IV. Here is the Principle and immediate Guide of his actions, which St. Paul here tells us was his Conscience.

V. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a good Conscience.

VI.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to SERM.  
 this, which St. Paul tells us was the belief of a Re-XXXVIII.  
 surrection, and of a future State of Rewards and Pu-  
 nishments consequent upon it; *for this cause*, be-  
 cause *I hope for a Resurrection both of the just and un-*  
*just, I exercise myself to have always a conscience void*  
*of offence, towards God, and towards Men.* I shall  
 speak but briefly to the three first of these particu-  
 lars, that I may be larger in the rest.

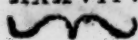
I. *Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice.*  
 It hath regard to the whole compass of his Duty, as  
 it respects God and Man. *I exercise myself*, says St.  
 Paul, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God,*  
*and towards Men.* And this distribution of our Du-  
 ty, under these two general Heads, is very frequent  
 in Scripture. The *Decalogue* refers our Duty to  
 these two Heads: And accordingly our Saviour  
 comprehends the whole Duty of Man in these two  
 great Commandments, the love of God, and of our  
 Neighbour, Matth. 22. 38. *Upon these two Com-*  
*mandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*, that is,  
 all the Moral Precepts which are dispers'd up and  
 down in the Law and the Prophets, may be referr'd  
 to these two general Heads.

II. *Here is his constancy and perseverance in this*  
*course.* St. Paul says, that he exercised himself to  
 have *always* a conscience void of offence; *διαναιτὸς*,  
*continually* at all times, in the whole course of his  
 life. We must not only make conscience of our  
 ways by fits and starts, but in the general course and  
 tenor of our lives and actions, without any balks and  
 intermissions.

There are some that will refrain from grosser Sins,  
 and be very strict at some Seasons; as during the  
 Time of a solemn Repentance, and for some days  
 before they receive the Sacrament; and perhaps for  
 a little while after it: And when these devout Sea-  
 sons are over, they let themselves loose again to their  
 former lewd and vicious course: But Religion should  
 be



SERM. be a constant frame and temper of mind, discovering  
XXXVII itself in the habitual course of our lives and actions.



III. *Here is likewise a very earnest care and endeavour to this Purpose.* Herein do I *exercise* myself, says St. Paul. The word *ἀσκῶ*, which is here render'd *exercise*, is a word of a very intense signification, and does denote that St. Paul applied himself to this business with all his care and might, and that he made it his earnest study and endeavour: And so we must; we must take great care to understand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning good and evil, that we may not mistake the nature of things, and call good evil, and evil good: We must apply our minds in good earnest to be thoroughly instructed in all the parts of our Duty, that so we may not be at a loss what to do when we are call'd to the practice of it. And when we know our Duty, we must be true and honest to ourselves, and very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. I proceed in the

IV. Place to consider the *Principle and immediate Guide of our Actions*, which St. Paul here tells us was his Conscience; *I exercise myself to have always a Conscience void of offence*: By which he does not only mean a resolution to follow the dictate and direction of his Conscience, but likewise a due care to inform his Conscience aright, that he might not in any thing transgress the Law of God, and his Duty.

Conscience is the great Principle of moral Actions, and our Guide in matter of Sin and Duty. It is not the Law and Rule of our Actions, that the Law of God only is; but it is our immediate Guide and Director, telling us what is the Law of God and our Duty.

But because *Conscience* is a word of a very large and various signification, I shall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common speech concerning *Conscience*, every man is represented as having a kind of *Court and Tribunal*  
in

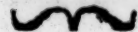
in his own Breast, where he tries himself and all his SERM.  
 Actions: And *Conscience*, under one Notion or other, XXXV III.  
 sustains all parts in this Trial: The *Court* is called  
 the *Court* of a man's *Conscience*, and the *Bar* at  
 which the *Sinner* stands impleaded, is call'd the *Bar*  
*of Conscience*: *Conscience* also is the *Accuser*; and it is  
 the *Record* and *Register* of our Crimes, in which  
 the memory of them is preserv'd: And it is the  
*Witness* which gives testimony for or against us,  
 hence are those expressions of *the testimony of our Con-*  
*sciences*, and that *a man's own Conscience is to him in-*  
*stead of a thousand witnesses*: And it is likewise the *Judge*  
 which declares the Law, and what we ought, or  
 ought not to have done, in such or such a Case, and  
 accordingly passes Sentence upon us by acquitting  
 or condemning us. Thus according to common  
 use of Speech, *Conscience* sustains all imaginable  
 parts in this *Spiritual Court*: It is the *Court*, and the  
*Bench*, and the *Bar*; the *Accuser*, and *Witness*, and  
*Register*, and all.

But I shall only at present consider *Conscience* in  
 the most common and famous Notion of it, as it is  
 a Principle or Faculty whereby we judge of moral  
 Good and Evil, and do accordingly direct and go-  
 vern our Actions: So that in short, *Conscience* is  
 nothing else but *the judgment of a man's own mind*  
*concerning the morality of his Actions*; that is, the  
*good, or evil, or indifference* of them; telling us what  
 things are commanded by God, and consequently  
 are our *duty*; what things are forbidden by Him,  
 and consequently are *sinful*; what things are neither  
 commanded nor forbidden, and consequently are *in-*  
*different*. I proceed in the

Vth place, *To give some Rules and Directions for*  
*the keeping of a Conscience void of offence*. And they  
 shall be these following:

*First*, Never in any case to act contrary to the per-  
 suasion and conviction of our *Conscience*. For that cer-  
 tainly is a great Sin, and that which properly offends the

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Conscience and renders us *guilty*, *guilt* being nothing else but trouble arising in our minds from a consciousness of having done contrary to what we are verily persuaded was our Duty : And tho' perhaps this persuasion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the same so long as this persuasion continues ; because every man's Conscience is a kind of God to him, and accuseth or absolves him according to the present persuasion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend against the light and conviction of our own mind.

*Secondly*, We should be very careful to inform our Consciences aright, that we may not mistake concerning our Duty ; or if we do, that our error and mistake may not be grossly wilful and faulty.

And this Rule is the more necessary to be consider'd and regarded by us, because generally men are apt to think it a sufficient excuse for any thing, that they did it according to their Conscience, but this will appear to be a dangerous mistake, and of very pernicious consequence to the Souls of men, if we consider these two things.

*1st*, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conscience.

*2dly*, And these Sins may prove damnable without a particular Repentance for them.

*1st*, That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins, in following an erroneous Conscience. Men may neglect and abuse themselves so far, as to do some of the worst and wickedest things in the World with a persuasion that they do well. Our Saviour tells his Disciples, *John* 16. 2. that *the time should come* when the *Jews* should put them to death, *thinking they did God good service* : Nay, the *Jews* murdered the Son of God himself through ignorance and a false persuasion of mind : *Father, forgive them*, says our Blessed Lord, when he was breathing out his Soul upon the Cross, *Luke* 23. 34. *for they know not what they do*. And St. Peter, after he had charged the

*Jews*



*Jews with killing the Prince of Life*, he presently adds, **SERM.**  
*I wot that through ignorance you did it, as did also your* **XXXVIII.**  
*Rulers.* And St. Paul, in mitigation of that great  
 Crime, says, *Acts 3. 17. Had they known, they would*  
*not have crucified the Lord of Life and Glory:* And  
 concerning himself, he tells us, *Acts 26. 9. That he*  
*verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many*  
*things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth:* And  
 yet notwithstanding that he acted herein according  
 to the perswasion of his Conscience, he tells us that  
 he had been a *blasphemer*, and a *persecutor*, and *in-*  
*jurious*, and a *murtherer*, and in a word *the greatest*  
*of sinners.* So that men may be guilty of the greatest  
 Sins in following an erroneous Conscience. And,

2dly, *These sins may prove damnable, without a par-*  
*ticular repentance for them.* Where the ignorance  
 and mistake is not grossly wilful, there God will ac-  
 cept of a general repentance; but where it is grossly  
 wilful, great Sins committed upon it are not par-  
 don'd without a particular repentance for them:  
 And an error which proceeds from want of ordinary  
 human Care and due Government of a man's self, is  
 in a great degree wilful: As when it proceeds from  
 an unreasonable and obstinate prejudice, from great  
 pride and self-conceit, and contempt of counsel and  
 instruction; or from a visible byas of self-interest,  
 or when it is accompanied with a furious passion and  
 zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things,  
 contrary to the light of nature and the common  
 sense of humanity: An error proceeding from such  
 causes, and producing such effects, is wilful in so  
 high a degree, that whatever evil is done in virtue  
 of it, is almost equally faulty with a direct and wil-  
 ful violation of the law of God.

The ignorance and mistake doth indeed make the  
 person so mistaken more capable of forgiveness,  
 which is the ground of our *Saviour's* Prayer for his  
 Murtherers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not*  
*what they do:* St. Paul likewise tells us, that we found

SERM. mercy upon this account, *Nevertheless*, says he, 1 Tim. XXXVIII. 1. 13. *I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief*, that is, through a false persuasion of mind, not believing it to be a Sin: And yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. Peter after he had convinced the *Jews* of their great Sin in crucifying *Christ*, though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to the pardon and forgiveness of it: And therefore after he had said, *I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers*; he immediately adds, *Acts* 3. 19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.*

So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they embrace in order to practice, and not to suffer themselves to be hurried away by an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion, without a due and calm examination of things; not to be overborn by pride, or humour, or partiality, or interest, or by a furious and extravagant zeal: Because proportionably to the voluntariness of our Error will be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that Error. Indeed where our Error is involuntary, and morally invincible, God will consider it, and make allowance for it; but where it is voluntary, and occasioned by our own gross faults and neglect, we are bound to consider, and rectify our mistake: For whatever we do contrary to the Law of God and our Duty, in virtue of that false persuasion, we do it at our utmost peril, and must be answerable to God for it, notwithstanding we did it according to the dictate of our conscience.

A third Rule is this, that in all doubts of Conscience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one side, when there is perhaps as much or greater reason of doubting on the other: And consequently, that we be

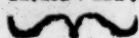
be as tractable and easy to receive satisfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in Cases that are equal: I mean, where our Passions and Interests are not concern'd, as well as where they are. And if we do not do this, it is a sign that we are partial in our pretences of Conscience, and that we do not aim merely at the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, but have some other interest and design. SERM. XXXVIII.

For it is a very suspicious thing, when mens doubts and scruples bear all on one side, especially if it be on that side which is against Charity, and Peace, and obedience to Government, whether ecclesiastical or civil: In this Case I think that a meer doubt, and much more a scruple, may, nay, ought in reason to be over-ruled by the Command of Authority, by the Opinion and Judgment of wise and good men, and in consideration of the publick Peace, and of the unity and edification of the Church.

Not that a man is in any case to go against the clear persuasion and conviction of his own mind; but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing, it seems to me in that case very reasonable that a man should suffer a meer doubt or scruple to be over-rul'd by any of those weighty considerations which I mentioned before.

The *fourth* Rule is, that all the pretences of Conscience are vehemently to be suspected, which are accompanied with turbulent passion and a furious zeal. It is an hundred to one but such a man's Conscience is in the wrong. It is an excellent saying of St. James, *ch. 1. 20. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, that is, the fierce passions of men are no proper instruments to promote Religion, and to accomplish any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be transported with a wild zeal, and pretend conscience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an error: None are so likely to judge amiss, as they whose minds are clouded and blinded by their Passions.



*Nubila mens est,  
Hæc ubi regnant.*

Boeth.

And if men would carefully observe themselves, they might almost certainly know when they act upon Reason and a true Principle of Conscience. A good Conscience is easy to it self, and pleased with its own doings; but when a man's passion and discontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do as it were, bear down his Conscience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneasy state.

There can hardly be a broader sign that a man is in the wrong, than to *rage and be confident*: Because this plainly shews that the man's Conscience is not settled upon clear reason, but that he hath brought over his Conscience to his interest, or to his humour and discontent.

And tho' such a man may be so far blinded by his passion as not to *see* what is right, yet methinks he should *feel* himself to be in the wrong by his being so very hot and impatient.

Art thou sure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and hast reason to be pleased: What cause then, what need is there of being angry? Hath a man Reason on his side? What would he have more? Why then does he fly out into passion? which as it gives no strength to a bad argument, so I could never yet see that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

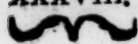
Of the great evil, and the perpetual mistake of this furious kind of Zeal, the *Jews* are a lively and a lamentable Example, in their carriage towards our blessed *Saviour* and his Apostles: and more particularly Saint *Paul*, when he persecuted the *Christians* from a false and erroneous persuasion of his Conscience. Hear how St. *Paul* describes himself and his own doings whilst he was acted by an erroneous Conscience:

Conscience : *Acts* 22. 4. *I persecuted*, says he, *this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women* : And in another Chapter, *Acts* 26. 9. *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth* : Here was his erroneous Conscience. Let us next see what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it ; *verse* 10, 11. *Which things*, says he, *I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death I gave my voice against them, and punish'd them oft in every Synagogue, and compell'd them to blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange Cities*. When Conscience transports men with such a furious zeal and passion, it is hardly ever in the right ; or if it should happen to be so, they who are thus transported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cause, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong even when they are in the right.

*Fifthly*, All pretences of Conscience are likewise to be suspected, which are not accompanied with modesty and humility, and a teachable temper and disposition, willing to learn and to be better inform'd. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into mistakes ; because pride and fulness of a man's self does keep out knowledge, and obstructs all the passages by which wisdom and instruction should enter into men : Besides that it provokes God to abandon men to their own follies and mistakes ; for God *resisteth the proud, but the meek will be guide in judgment, and will give more grace and wisdom to the humble*. When men are once come to this, to think themselves wiser than their Teachers, and to despise and cast off their Guides, no wonder if *then* they go astray.

*Lastly*, Let us be sure to mind that which is our plain and unquestionable Duty ; the great things of Religion, wherein the life and substance of it doth

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XXXVIII.



consist; and *the things* likewise which make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another: And let us not suffer our Disputes about lesser matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: But let it be our great care not to fail in those greater things which are comprehended under the *two great Commandments of the Law*, the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: Let us be strict and constant in our piety and devotion towards *God*; chaste and temperate in reference to *ourselves*; just and honest, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards *all men*; submissive and obedient to our *Superiors, natural, civil, and spiritual*. A due regard to these great Virtues of the *Christian* life is the way to keep a *Conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men*: And surely the best means to have our doubts cleared about matters of lesser moment in Religion, is heartily to set about the practice of the great and unquestionable Duties of it: So our *blessed Saviour* hath assur'd us, that *if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of his Doctrine whether it be of God*. I come now in the

Vith and last place, to consider the great Motive and Encouragement to this conscientious care of our *Lives and Actions*; which St. Paul here tells us was his belief of a *Resurrection*, and of the Rewards and Punishment consequent upon it; *I have hope*, says he, *towards God that there shall be a Resurrection both of the just and unjust: For this cause therefore I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward Men*.

If we believe the *Resurrection of the dead* and a future Judgment, we ought to be very careful to discharge a good Conscience now, in order to the rendering of a good Account hereafter; that we may be sincere and without offence, with respect to the day of *Christ*, as the *Apostle* expresseth it. For when that great Day of Recompences shall come, we shall most assuredly find that nothing will then raise



our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witnesses of a good Conscience: And therefore we should make that our constant care and companion *now*, which will *then* be our great comfort and rejoicing, a good Conscience and *the testimony* of it, *that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our Conversation in the world.* SERM. XXXVIII.

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the great Judge of the World, nothing will fill our minds with so much terror, and our faces with so much confusion, as the clamorous accusations of a guilty Conscience; which will be *more than a thousand witnesses* against us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and pass almost as severe a Sentence upon us as the Judge himself can.

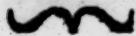
This is that which will make the sinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever: And one of the principal ingredients of his misery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorse of his own mind for his wilful wickedness and folly; which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quench'd.

This consideration ought to have a mighty Operation upon us to make us very careful to have Consciences void of offence *now*, that they may be free from torment and anguish *hereafter*: That when we shall come into the other World, we may not be eternally displeased with ourselves, and enrag'd at our own doings; but may carry with us thither Consciences clear of all guilt, either by Innocency, or by Repentance.

The firm belief of a future state of eternal Happiness or Misery in another World, is the great Weight or Spring that sets a going those two powerful Principles of human Activity, the Hopes and the Fears of men; and is in its Nature so fitted to raise these Passions to that degree, that did not experience shew us the contrary, one would think it  
morally

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morally impossible for human Nature to resist the mighty force of it.



All men are sensible, more or less, at one time or other, of the true force of these Arguments; but the mischief is, that in some Persons they work quite the wrong way, and instead of leading men to Repentance, they drive them to Infidelity: They cannot deny the force of these Arguments, if they were true; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true: And so far they are in the right, that granting these things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwise than they do: But here is their fatal miscarriage, that being resolved upon an evil course, since they cannot reconcile their Practice with such Principles as these, they will fit their Principles to their Practice; and so they will believe nothing at all of the Rewards and Punishments of another World, lest this should disturb them in their Course. Vain Men! As if Heaven and Hell must needs vanish and disappear, because some witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

These men are Infidels in their own defence, and merely for the quiet of their own minds; that their Consciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right Belief and an evil Conscience are but unsuitable Companions; they are quarrelsome Neighbours, and must needs live very uneasily by one another. He that believes the Principles of Religion, and yet is conscious to himself that he hath liv'd contrary to them, and still continues to do so, how can he possibly have any peace and quiet in his mind? unless like *Jonah* he can sleep in a storm, and his *Conscience* be, as it were, *seared with a hot iron*: For if his Conscience be awake, and in any degree sensible, the evident danger of eternal ruin, continually hanging over him, must in reason either drive him to repentance or to despair: If so forcible and violent an Argument can  
make

make no impresson upon us, we are stupid and bewitch'd, we are lost and undone, we are wretched and miserable for ever. SERM.  
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But besides the future Reward of a holy and conscientious course, which is *unspeakable and full of glory*; it hath also this present fruit, this *earnest*, as I may say, and ready money in hand, the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable *than thousands of gold and silver*, the unspeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath most need of it: For it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the sorest afflictions and calamities of Life, but even at the hour of Death; when the miseries of life oppress him, and the sorrows of death compass him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no such comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witness in our breasts of our own innocency and integrity: When we are afflicted by God, or persecuted and revil'd by men, it cannot but be a mighty consolation to us to be conscious to our selves of our own sincerity. For though no man can acquit and justify himself before God as to the perfect innocency of of his life, in which sense St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 4. 4. that *though he knew nothing by himself, yet was he not thereby justified*; I say, though no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general course and tenor of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to God, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him as a tender and compassionate Father, and not as an angry and revengeful Judge.

With this, holy and patient Job, under all those terrible disasters and calamities which beset him, was able in some measure to comfort himself: After he had lost all, and he had a great deal to lose; when he was forsaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his best Friends concerning his sincerity: In these sad and disconsolate circumstances,



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cumstances, what was it that bore up his spirit? nothing but the conscience of his own integrity. See with what resolution and constancy of mind he asserts and maintains it: *Job 25. 5, 6. I will not, says he, remove mine integrity from me: my righteousness will I hold fast, and will not let it go: mine heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live.* You see, that when every thing else was gone, his integrity stuck by him, and supported him to the last.

And as to persecutions and sufferings from men, our own innocence, and the goodness of our Cause, will be our best comfort under them: When we are not guilty to our selves that we have deserved them from men, and are inwardly assured that whatever we patiently suffer for God and a good Conscience, will all turn to our account another Day, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

This was *that* which supported the first *Christians*, that *noble Army of Martyrs*, under all those bitter and cruel persecutions, which had otherwise been beyond all human patience to have endur'd: This comforted them in all their tribulations; *Our rejoicing, says St. Paul, is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.*

So likewise under that inferior but equally malicious sort of persecution, of which this Age is so very profuse and prodigal, I mean the causeless Calumnies and Reproaches of Men: If under these we can but approve our Consciences to God, the uncharitable Censures of Men are not so much to be regarded by us: Some impression they will make upon a tender mind, but we must not, if we can help it, let them sink too deep into our spirits: *If our hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God; 1 Joh. 3. 21.* and then surely much more towards men: If God and our own Consciences do but acquit us, methinks it should be no such difficult matter to bear the slanders and hard censures of men.

But

But above all other times, the comfort of a good SERM.  
 Conscience is most sensible, and most considerable XXXVIII.  
 at the hour of Death! For as nothing dejects a man's  
 spirits more, and sends him down with so much sor-  
 row to the Grave, as the guilt of an evil Conscience;  
 what terror and anguish, what rage and despair do  
 seize upon a Sinner at that time, when he reflects  
 upon what he hath done, and considers what he is  
 like to suffer? So on the other hand, there is no-  
 thing that revives and raises the fainting spirits of a  
 dying man, like the Conscience of a holy and useful  
 life, which hath brought glory to God, and good to  
 Men. *The wicked*, says Solomon, Prov. 14. 32. *is*  
*driven away in his wickedness*, that is, he is carried  
 out of the World, as it were, in a storm and tem-  
 pest: *But the righteous hath hope in his death*; he  
 usually dies calmly and comfortably: *Mark the*  
*perfect man*, says David, Psal. 37. 37. *and behold*  
*the upright; for the end of that man is peace.*

If a man be conscious to himself that he hath  
 sincerely endeavour'd to keep the Commandments of  
 God, and to do the things which please him; if  
 he hath *lived* inoffensively, and as St. Paul, *Acts* 3.  
 21. says of himself, *in all good conscience before God*  
*and men*; what an unspeakable consolation must it  
 be to him, in that dark and gloomy time, and  
 when he is *walking through the valley of the shadow of*  
*death*, then *to fear no evil*? and to be able with our  
 blessed Saviour to say, tho' in a much inferior mea-  
 sure and degree, *Joh. 17. 4. Father, I have glori-*  
*fied thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou*  
*hast given me to do*: And to be able to look Death  
 in the face with the like courage and constancy of  
 mind as St. Paul did when he saw it approaching to-  
 wards him: *I am now*, says he, *2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8.*  
*ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at*  
*hand*; *I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my*  
*race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid*  
*up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the*  
*righteous*

SERM. *righteous judge shall give me at that day.* A comfortable  
 XXXVIII. Death, that is free from the stings and upbrai-  
 dings, the terrors and tortures, the confusion and amazement of a guilty Conscience, is a happiness so desirable, as to be well worth the best care and endeavour of a Man's whole Life.

Let us then have a conscientious regard to the whole compass of our Duty, and with St. Paul, *Let us exercise our selves to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men:* And let us never do any thing whereby we shall offer violence to the light of our minds. God hath given us this Principle to be our constant guide and companion; and whoever, after due care to inform himself aright, does sincerely follow the dictate and direction of this Guide, shall never fatally miscarry: But whoever goes against the clear dictate and conviction of his Conscience, in so doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and sins against God and his Soul.

And to the end we may keep our Consciences clear of guilt, we should frequently examine our selves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our selves to a strict account for them; that where-soever we have fail'd of innocency, we may make it up by Repentance; and may get our Consciences clear'd of Guilt by Pardon and Forgiveness: And if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the testimony of our Consciences; because many great Sins may slip out of our memories without a particular Repentance for them, which yet do require and stand in need of a particular Repentance.

Especially we should search our Consciences more narrowly at these more solemn times of Repentance, and when we are preparing our selves to receive the holy Sacrament. And if at these times our hearts do accuse and condemn us for any thing,  
 we



we should not only heartily lament and bewail it before God, but sincerely resolve by God's Grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that Sin which we have then repented of, and have ask'd forgiveness of God for: For if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our Consciences afresh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the last place, we should reverence our Consciences, and stand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their testimony and verdict: For Conscience is a domestick Judge, and a kind of a familiar God: And therefore, next to the supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, every Man should be afraid to offend his own Reason and Conscience, which whenever we knowingly do amiss, will beat us with many stripes, and handle us more severely than the greatest Enemy we have in the World: So that next to the dreadful Sentence of the great Day, every Man hath Reason to dread the Sentence of his own Conscience; *God indeed is greater than our hearts, and knows all Things*; but under Him we have the greatest Reason to fear the Judgment of our own Consciences: For nothing but that can give us comfort, and nothing can create so much trouble and disquiet to us.

And though the judgment of our Consciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great Reason to have great regard to it; and that upon several accounts, which I shall but briefly mention, and so conclude.

*First*, Because the judgment of our Conscience is free from any compulsion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no; and make us to pass sentence against our selves, whether we see Reason for it or not.

*Secondly*, The sentence of our own Consciences is very likely to be impartial, at least not too hard on the severe side, because Men naturally love themselves,

SERM. selves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own  
 XXXVIII. case : All the World cannot bribe a Man against  
 himself : There is no Man whose mind is not either  
 distemper'd by melancholy, or deluded by false Prin-  
 ciples, that is apt to be credulous against himself, and  
 his own interest and peace.

*Thirdly*, The judgment which our Conscience passeth upon our own Actions, is upon the most intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of the true motives and ends. We may easily be deceiv'd in our judgment of the Actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worse than in truth they are : Because we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what Circumstances there may be to excuse or aggravate them ; how strong the temptation was, or how weak the Judgment of him that was seduc'd by it into error and folly.

But we are conscious to all the secret springs and motives, and circumstances of our own Actions : We can descend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and search into the most retired corners of our intentions and ends ; which none, besides ourselves but only God can do ; for excepting *him only, none knows the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him.*

*Fourthly*, The Sentence of our Conscience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou mayst possibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermost parts of the Earth, but thou canst not stir one step from thyself : In vain shalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee and hide thee from the sight of thine own Conscience.

Wretched and miserable man ! when thou hast offended and wounded thy Conscience : For whither canst thou go, to escape the eye of this Witness, the terror of this Judge, the torment of this Executioner ? A man may as soon get rid of himself, and

quit

quit his own being, as fly from the sharp Accusati-  
 ons and stinging Guilt of his own Conscience; which  
 will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by  
 repentance and forgiveness.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by  
 evil Spirits, and yet the Spirit of a man which is in  
 him, throughly affrighted with its own Guilt, may  
 be a more gastly and amazing Spectacle than all  
 the Devils in Hell: There is no such frightful Ap-  
 parition in the World, as a man's own guilty and  
 terrible Conscience staring him in the face: *A spirit*  
*that is thus wounded, who can bear?*

To conclude: Let these considerations prevail  
 with us always to live, not with regard to the  
 opinion of others, which may be grounded upon  
 mistake, or may not indeed be their opinion, but  
 their flattery; but with regard to the judgment of  
 our own Conscience, which though it may some-  
 times be mistaken, can never be brib'd and corrup-  
 ted: We may be hypocrites to others and base flatter-  
 ers, but our Consciences whenever they are through-  
 ly awaken'd are always sincere, and deal truly with  
 us, and speak to us as they think.

Therefore whatever we say or do, let it be sin-  
 cere: For though hypocrisy may for a while pre-  
 serve our esteem and reputation with others, yet it can  
 signify nothing to the peace of our own minds:  
 And then what will it avail us to conceal any thing  
 from other Men, when we can hide nothing that we  
 say or do from our own Consciences?

The sum of all is this: If we would keep a Con-  
 science void of offence, let us always be calm and  
 considerate, and have the patience to examine things  
 thoroughly and impartially: Let us be humble and  
 willing to learn, and never too proud and stiff to be  
 better informed: Let us do what we can to free  
 our selves from prejudice and passion, from self-con-  
 ceit and self-interest, which are often too strong a  
 bias upon the judgments of the best Men, as we  
 Vol. II. D d may.

SERM.  
 XXXVIII.



SERM. may see every day in very sad melancholy instances :  
 XXXVIII. And having taken all due care to inform our Con-  
 sciences aright, let us follow the judgment of our  
 minds in what we do ; and then we have done what  
 we can to please God.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good Conscience, we should always be easy, and good company to our selves : But if we offend our Consciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappiest breach in the World ; we stir up a quarrel in our own breasts, and arm our own minds against our selves ; we create an enemy to our selves in our own bosoms, and fall out with the best and most inseparable Companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, *a good conscience will be a continual Feast*, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day which nothing else can : And then whatever happens to us, we may *commit our selves to God in well-doing, as into the hands of a faithful Creator* : To whom with our *Blessed Saviour and Redeemer*, and the *Holy Ghost the Comforter*, be all honour and glory, now and ever, *Amen.*

S E R M O N

# SERMON XXXIX.

How to keep a truly Religious Fast.

*Preached before the QUEEN at  
Whitehall, September 16. 1690.*

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✱ ZECH. vii. 5.

*Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the  
Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned  
in the fifth and seventh month, even those  
seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST  
UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?*

**I**N the beginning of this *Chapter* the People of SERM.  
XXXIX. the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finish'd till about two years after, send to the *Priests* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to observe during the seventy Years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of Feasting and Gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an Answer in this, and the following *Chapter*. And first he *expostulates* with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did indeed, deserve

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that

SERM. that name, and were not rather a mere shew and  
 XXXIX. pretence of a Religious Fast, *vers.* 4. 5. Then came  
 the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying, Speak  
 unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests,  
 saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and  
 seventh month, even those seventy Years, did ye at all  
 fast unto me, even unto me? The enquiry was  
 particularly concerning the Fast of the fifth Month,  
 because the occasion of that was more considera-  
 ble than of all the other: but the Answer of God  
 mentions the Fasts of the fifth and seventh Months,  
 these two being probably observ'd with greater so-  
 lemnity than the other.

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will  
 be requisite to consider the original and occasion of  
 all their Monthly Fasts: Which, as appears from o-  
 ther places of Scripture, in short, was this: When  
 the Jews were carried away Captive into *Babylon*, in  
 a deep Sense of this great Judgment of God upon  
 them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction  
 which they lay under, they appointed four annual  
 Fasts, which they observed during their seventy  
 years Captivity, *viz.* the Fast of the fourth Month,  
 in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through  
 the Wall of *Jerusalem*, which we find mention'd,  
*Jer.* 52. 6, 7. The Fast of the fifth Month, in  
 memory of the destruction of the City and Temple  
 of *Jerusalem*, *verses* 12, 13. The Fast of the seventh  
 Month, in remembrance of the slaying of *Gedaliah*,  
 upon which followed the dispersion of the Jews, of  
 which we have an account, *Jer.* 42. 1, 2. And the  
 Fast of the tenth Month, in memory of the begin-  
 ning of the Siege of *Jerusalem*, of which we find  
 mention, *2 Kings* 25. 1.

In this order we find these four Annual Fasts men-  
 tion'd, *Zechar.* 8. 19. Not according to the order  
 of the Events, but of the Months of the several  
 Years in which these Events happened: And there  
 likewise God gives a full Answer to this Enquiry  
 concern-



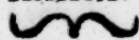
concerning the continuance of these *annual Fasts*, SERM.  
namely, That they should for the future be turned XXXIX.  
into solemn Days of Joy and Gladness. Zech. 8.

18, 19. *And the word of the Lord of Hosts, came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth Month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the Fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of Judah joy and gladness, and chearful Feasts.*

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* That is, did these *Fasts* truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real Repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a Word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God hath no regard to them, as it follows in this Chapter; verse 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart, but they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea they made their heart as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear: so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did

SERM. not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their  
XXXIX. obstinacy and disobedience.



And what God here by the Prophet *Zachary* calls *fasting unto Him, even unto him*, the Prophet *Isaiab* calls the *Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord*. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer, &c.*

From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the *Jews* were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the *Text*: *When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general, the fault which God finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but failed in their main design, which was sincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reason he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by Him as perform'd unto Him, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *first*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to ourselves, I shall consider more particularly

cularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by SERM. their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Re-XXXIX. pentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to *fast unto God*, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that he would avert his Judgments and turn away his anger from us. *Fourthly*, in intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon ourselves and others as are needful and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the Poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely,

II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation doth require at our Hands. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble ourselves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty



SERM. ty God hath been so justly incensed against us.  
 XXXIX. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest Prayers and Supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fastings and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's Assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of us upon so solemn an occasion as this.

*First*, We should humble ourselves before God every one for his own personal Sins and Miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God and increased the Publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance should begin with ourselves and our own Sins, because Repentance is always designed to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular Persons which do constitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* prescribes as the true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedication of the Temple: 1 Kings 8: 37, 38, 39, 40. *If there be*, says he, *in the Land famine; if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust; or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Cities: Whatever plague, whatever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all the*  
 People

People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY SERM.  
MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN XXXIX.  
HEART, and spread forth his hands towards this  
House: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place,  
and forgive, and do, and give to every man according  
to his way, whose heart thou knowest; for thou, even  
thou only, knowest the hearts of all the Children of men;  
that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in  
the Land which thou gavest to their Fathers.

You see here that in case of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation must begin with particular Persons: *What prayer or supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy People Israel, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular Persons must be convinced of their personal Sins and Transgressions, before God will hear the Prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And because we cannot perform this part of confessing and bewailing our own personal Sins, and of testifying our particular Repentance for them, in the publick Congregation, any otherwise than by joining with them in a general Humiliation and Repentance; therefore we should do well, on the day before the publick Fast, at least the Morning before we go to the publick Assembly, to humble ourselves before God in our Families, and especially in our Closets; confessing to him, with great shame and sorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the several Aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of against the Divine Majesty, so far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earnestly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveness of them, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*.

And so likewise, after we return from the Church, we should retire again into our Closets, and there  
renew

SERM. renew our Repentance, with most serious and sincere  
 XXXIX. Resolutions of Reforming in all those particulars  
 which we have confessed and repented of. And if  
 we would have our Resolutions to come to any good,  
 we must make them as distinct and particular as we  
 can; and charge it upon ourselves, as to such and  
 such Sins, for which we have declared our sorrow  
 and repentance, that we will amend and do better  
 for the future.

And we should endeavour also, to fortify those  
 good Resolutions, in the best manner we can by se-  
 rious consideration, and by solemn promises of better  
 obedience, and of a more conscientious Care of our  
 Lives and all our Actions for the future: And then,  
 with the greatest earnestness and importunity, we  
 should implore the Assistance of God's Grace and  
 Holy Spirit to this purpose.

By this means the great End of a solemn Fast and  
 Humiliation will be in some good Measure attain'd,  
 and not wholly defeated, as for the most part it is by  
 being huddled up and lost in a confused and general  
 Repentance, which commonly ends together with  
 the publick Assembly, without any real and perma-  
 nent Effect upon particular Persons: Perhaps a great  
 part of the Congregation may have been in some de-  
 gree sorry for their sins; but after all no man for-  
 sakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but  
 leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries  
 home with him the same Affection for his Sins  
 which he had before, and a secret Resolution not to  
 leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They  
 had their solemn monthly Fast, in which they made  
 a great shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their*  
*beards like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sackcloth*  
*and ashes under them*: But there was no inward change  
 of their minds, no real Reformation of their Lives;  
 and as soon as ever the publick solemnity was over,  
 they turned every one to his former evil Course. So  
 God



God complains of them : Jer. 8. 6. *I hearkned,* SERM.  
*says he, and I heard, but they speak not aright; no* XXXIX.  
*man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What*  
*have I done? but they turned every one to his course, as*  
*the horse rusheth into the battle. They speak not aright,*  
 that is, they did not take the right Method for an  
 effectual Repentance: They humbled themselves in-  
 deed before God, and repented at random for the  
 Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all  
 of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a  
 heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all  
 this while, they never reflected upon themselves in  
 particular; they had no sense, no conviction of  
 their own personal faults and miscarriages, without  
 which there can be no true general Repentance: *No*  
*man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I*  
*done?*

And as they had no sense of their own particular  
 Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no  
 thought of leaving them; but as soon as ever the  
 publick Fasting and Humiliation was over, they re-  
 turned to them again with the same eager and furi-  
 ous Appetite; *they turned every one to his course, as*  
*the horse rusheth into the battle,* that is, without any  
 consideration, or sense of danger.

*Secondly,* we should likewise upon this Day, hear-  
 tily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especial-  
 ly the great and crying Sins of the Nation commit-  
 ted by all Ranks and Orders of Men amongst us,  
 and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty  
 God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good  
 men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted  
 for the Sins of others, as well as for their own;  
 to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy*  
 does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*,  
 and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which  
 their Sins were ready to bring down upon them: Jer.  
 13. 17. *But if ye will not return,* says he to that  
 obdurate

SERM. obdurate People, *my soul shall weep in secret places for*  
 XXXIX. *your pride, or obstinacy ; and mine eyes shall weep sore*  
 and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is  
 carried away captive. And indeed almost the whole  
 Prophecy of *Jeremy*, and his Book of *Lamentations*,  
 are little else but a perpetual Humiliation and Mourn-  
 ing for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments  
 of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to  
 be coming upon them.

We read likewise of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*,  
 how he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the  
 wicked : For that righteous man, saith *St. Peter*, dwel-  
 ling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his right-  
 eous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.

Holy *David* also, upon all occasions, testifies his  
 great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw  
 committed by others, and was so affected with them  
 that he trembled at the very thought of them : *Psal.*  
*119. 136. Rivers of tears, says he, run down mine*  
*eyes, because men keep not thy Law.* And in the same  
*Psalms, v. 53. Horror hath taken hold of me, because*  
*of the wicked which forsake thy Law.* And again, *I*  
*beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they*  
*kept not thy Word.*

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God  
 and mourn, in the Name of all the People, and of  
 all Degrees and orders of men among them, take  
 shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which  
 they had been guilty of ? *We have sinned and have*  
*committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, O Lord,*  
*righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion*  
*of face, as at this day : To our Kings, to our Princes,*  
*and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, up-  
 on a solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, ac-  
 knowledge and bewail the Sins of the People ? *Ezra*  
*9. 6, 7. O my God, says he, I am ashamed and blush*  
*to lift up my face to thee my God : For our iniquities*  
*are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown*  
 up

up unto the Heavens : Since the Days of our Fathers, SERM.  
 we have been in a great trespass unto this day ; and for XXXIX.  
 our iniquities have we, our Kings and our Priests,  
 been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands,  
 &c.

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinful Land, upon this solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous Aggravations ; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overspread the Nation, and diffused itself through all Ranks and Degrees of Men, *Magistrates, Ministers, and People*. I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

1. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the Vices and Immoralities of others, who are far from being Examples of Virtue themselves ? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of Justice in the Nation, and that Magistrates are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution : As against the prophanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the Meditations of another World ; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity which he never fails to take, to steal *the good seed*, the Word of God, which  
they



SERM. they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and  
 XXXIX. to make it of none effect : And which is yet worse,  
 by lewd and sinful practices, which are unlawful, at  
 any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach  
 and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution  
 the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for  
 which the land mourns ; and against *Drunkenness*,  
 and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common,  
 and so impudently committed among us : whether  
 they be civil, or ecclesiastical laws ; and it is hard  
 to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to pro-  
 secute that horrible Sin of *Murder*, so frequently  
 now committed in our streets beyond the example of  
 former Ages, with that severity and impartiality  
 which is necessary to free the nation from the guilt  
 of that crying Sin, which calls so loud to Heaven  
 for Vengeance.

And all this, notwithstanding the magistrates are  
 under the oath of God to put the laws in due exe-  
 cution against all these crimes, so far as they come  
 to their knowledge, and fall under their cognizance.

2. The Sins of the *Ministers*, who serve at God's  
 Altar, and watch over the Souls of Men, whose  
 blood will be required at their hands, if any of them  
 perish through their fault and neglect. There is no  
 reason to doubt, but that there are a good number  
 of faithful Shepherds in the land, who watch over  
 their flocks with great care and conscience, remem-  
 bring the dreadful Account which they must one day  
 make to *Him who shall judge the quick and dead*, of  
 the Souls committed to their charge.

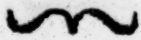
But yet how grossly do many of us fail of the faith-  
 ful discharge of the substantial parts of this high  
 office ? wanting a just sense of the inestimable worth  
 and value of the Souls of men for whom Christ died ;  
 taking little or no care to instruct them in the good  
 knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the  
 way

way to eternal happiness by an exemplary conversation. SERM.  
XXXIX.

Nay too many among us demean themselves so scandalously, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives so directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed Conversations: Hereby exposing them to the Craft of Seducers, and rendring them an easy prey to the *Emissaries* of the Church of Rome, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better shew of a strict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe those Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themselves and their own Doctrines? When all is said, the life and manners of the Preacher are the best eloquence, and have that dint and power of persuasion in them, which no words, nor art can equal. Whoso lives as he speaks, does, as it is said of our Blessed Saviour, *Speak as one that hath authority, and not as the scribes; Not as the scribes*; whose words, notwithstanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, because as our Saviour tells us of them, *they said, but did not*; their Lives were not answerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Blessed Saviour therefore *spoke as never man spake*, because he liv'd as never man liv'd; so innocent, so useful, so exemplary a life: He was *holy, harmless, and undefiled*: He did *no sin, neither was guile found in his lips*: He *fulfilled all righteousness, and went about doing good*. This was that which made him so powerful a Preacher of Righteousness; and we must necessarily fall so much short of him in the authority and efficacy of our Sermons, as we do in the holiness and goodness of our Lives. Such a Preacher, and such a practice as that  
of

SERM. of our Blessed Saviour was, is every way fitted to  
 - XXXIX. reprove, and persuade, and reform mankind.



We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blasphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by those, who above all others, are most nearly concern'd to preserve and support the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but see, how our Religion and Church are beset and endanger'd on every side; by the rude assaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning Arts of seducing Spirits, and by our own intestine Heats and Divisions: And it can never be sufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whose particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of Men in a holy Faith, and in the resolution of a good Life, should, for want of due instruction, and by the dissolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needless Differences about lesser things, have so great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of Men either to downright Infidelity, or to a careless neglect and prophane contempt of all Religion.

May not God justly expostulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the Jews? Jer. 5. 30, 31. *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets prophesy falsely, and the Priests bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* When they who are the Pastors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that pass, that the generality of the People sit down contented with the worst state of things, and are become almost indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of these things be, but that *the kingdom of God*  
 will



will be taken from us, and given to a nation that will  
bring forth the fruits of it?

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If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it must begin at the House of God; and they who are the Ministers of Religion must lead on this work, and be more careful and conscientious in the discharge of that high and holy office which is committed to them by *the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*. Else, what shall we say when God shall challenge us, as he once did the Pastors of the *Jewish Church*, by his Prophet, saying, *Jer. 13. 20, 21. Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautiful Flock? What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?*

3. The Sins of the People; amongst whom there is almost an universal corruption and depravation of Manners; insomuch that Impiety and Vice seem to have overspread the face of the Nation; so that we may take up that sad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Israel*, and apply it to ourselves; that we *are a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers*; that *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint*; and that *from the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*, *Isa. 1. 4, 5.*

We may justly stand amaz'd to consider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day; to think how long he hath born with us and *suffered our manners*; our open Prophaneness and Infidelity; our great Immoralities, and gross Hypocrisy; our insolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favoured counterfeiting of it for low and sordid ends: And, which is the most melancholy consideration of all the rest, we seem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongst us to save us.

And then if we consider further our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the civil

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Rights and Liberties of the Nation : Our incorrigibleness under the Judgments of God which we have seen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very severe and terrible manner been inflicted upon these Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteousness* : Our insensibleness of the Hand of God, so visible in his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time he hath wrought for us.

And lastly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewise whom He hath so signally honour'd in making them the happy Means and Instruments of our Deliverance : And this, not only express'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a most unnatural Conspiracy against Them with the greatest Enemies, not only to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law establish'd ; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with *Ezra*, ch. 9. 6. *And now, O our God, what shall we say unto thee after this?* And may not God likewise say to us, as he did more than once to the *Jews*? *Shall I not visit for these things saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*

*Thirdly*, We should likewise upon this Day, earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that he would be intreated by us at last to be pleas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their solemn days of Fasting and Prayer; and this God expressly enjoins: *Joel* 2. 15, 16, 17. *Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation,*  
*assemble*

*assemble the elders, &c. Let the priests, the ministers* SERM.  
*of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar,* XXXIX.  
*and let them say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give*  
*not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule*  
*over them: Wherefore should they say among the people,*  
*where is their God?*

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments, God promiseth a gracious answer; for so it immediately follows: *verse 18. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.*

And thus likewise Daniel, when he set his face to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, *Dan. 9. 3.* does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the Displeasure of God towards his People, and beg of Him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them. *Ver. 16, 17, 18, 19. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.*

And thus also should we, upon this solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which we so righteously have deserv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly exposed us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our Righteousness, but for his great Mercy; for



SERM. his own Name's sake, and because we are his Peo-  
 XXXIX. ple, and are called by his Name, and because his  
 holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us;  
 that He would be pleas'd to hear the Prayers of his  
 Servants and their Supplications which they have  
 made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

*Fourthly,* We should likewise upon this Day, pour  
 out our most earnest Supplications to almighty God,  
 for the preservation of their *Majesties* sacred Persons,  
 and for the prosperity and establishment of their Go-  
 vernment, and for the good success of their Arms  
 and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since his *Majesty*, with so  
 many confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is  
 engaged in so necessary an undertaking for the com-  
 mon good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual pre-  
 servation and recovery of their respective Rights;  
 we should earnestly implore the favour and assistance  
 of almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause,  
 against the common Invader and Oppressor of the  
 Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And that of his infinite goodness he would be  
 graciously pleased to take the Person of our *sovereign*  
*Lord the King* into the particular care and protection  
 of his Providence: That he would secure his pre-  
 cious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open  
 Violence: That he would give his Angels charge  
 over him, and cover his Head in the day of battel,  
 and crown it with Victory over his Enemies, and re-  
 store him to us again in safety.

And that he would likewise preserve and direct  
 the *Queen's Majesty*, in whose hands the administra-  
 tion of the Government is at present so happily plac'd:  
 That he would give her Wisdom and Resolution for  
 such a time as this, and support and carry her through  
 all the Difficulties of it.

And lastly, that he would bless them both with a  
 long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us;  
 that

that under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in  
all godliness and honesty.

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Fifthly, Our Fasting and Humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by the Prophet to King Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 4. 11. *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of our tranquility:* Hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquility and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruin of a sinful People, but to incline him to thoughts of Peace toward them: For so he promiseth to the Jews upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to him, which are always accompanied with Charity to the Poor: Jer. 29. 11, 12, 13. *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end: Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes, who are so ready to every good work, and such bright and shining Examples in this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite Mercy and Goodness of almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath

SERM. allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part,  
 XXXIX. to *give* and not to *receive*; and to be free from Per-  
 secution our selves, that so we might be in a capa-  
 city to give refuge and relief to them that were per-  
 secuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the Poor is a great security to us in times of Evil: So *David* assures us, speaking of the *righteous* or *charitable* Man; *He shall not*, says he, *be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of dearth he shall be satisfied.*

And so likewise in times of publick distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side, would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation hath many times prov'd its best safe-guard and shield: *It shall fight for thee*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, speaking of the Charity of Alms, *against thine enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but we of this Nation, by the great Mercy and Goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many and desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor, I say, not only to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be said as *Job* doth of the *Leviathan*, *Job* 41. 33, 34. *Upon the earth there is not his like*: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows, that *he is made without fear*; but surely the next words are apposite enough



enough, *He beholdeth all high things, and is king of all* SERM.  
*the children of pride : And yet He that is higher* XXXIX.  
*than the highest, even He that sitteth in the heavens*  
*doth laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.*

To conclude this *Particular* ; If we would have our Prayers ascend up to Heaven, and find acceptance there, our Alms must go along with them : So the *Angel* intimates, when he says to *Cornelius*, *Acts* 10. 4. *Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God : Thy Prayers and thine Alms ; they must go together if we desire that our Prayers should be effectual. And the Prophet Isaiab,* speaking of the *Fast which God hath chosen*, and which is *acceptable to him*, makes *Charity and Alms* a most essential part of it : *Isai.* 58. 7, 9, *Is it not*, says he, *to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house ? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh ? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am.*

*Sixthly, and lastly,* We should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. For in *this* Repentance doth mainly consist : This is the proper fruit and effect of all our Humiliation and good Resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future ; more pious and devout towards God, more sober and chaste with regard to ourselves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all Men : In a word, more innocent, more useful, and more *holy in all manner of conversation.*

And without this, all our Fasting and Humiliation, our most earnest Prayers and Supplications, will signify nothing : All our Sorrow and Tears will be but as water spilt upon the Ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own Souls, or to preserve *this untoward generation, this crooked and perverse Nation*, from ruin and destruc-

SERM. tion. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the only  
XXXIX. way to appease and reconcile him to a sinful People:

*2 Chron. 7. 14. If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: Then will I hear in heaven, and forgive their sins, and heal their land.*

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this day, to *turn us from our wicked ways*, God would then turn away his anger from us; and as he promised to the *Jews* by the Prophet *Zechary*, he would turn these our Monthly Fasts into joy, and gladness, and chearful feasts; *Zech. 8. 19.* as he hath in a great measure already done, *Blessed be his great and glorious Name.*

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God should deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against Him without fear all the Days of our Lives? To what Purpose should the Providence of God take so much care to preserve our Religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it serves most of us only to talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk against it; to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can we say, why the Kingdom of God should not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against, should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions and to make them good: If you will not be persuaded to practice, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would

would do when they were at the worst: So God tells SERM.  
the Prophet concerning them: *Ezek. 33. 31. They* XXXIX.  
*come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they sit be-*  
*fore thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but*  
*they will not do them.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very misbecoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the great and glorious *Majesty of Heaven and Earth*, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steady attention, without wandering, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God*, in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day; and to *turn to him that hath smitten us*, lest we provoke him, *to punish us yet seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for our sins*, and for our impenitency in them, till at last *He make our plagues wonderful*.

To



To conclude; Let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that there were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever, *Amen*.

## S E R M O N XL.

That God is the only Happiness of  
Man.

*Preached before the QUEEN at  
Whitehall, March 20. 169 $\frac{1}{2}$ .*

P S A L M lxxiii. 25.

*Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there  
is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*

SERM.  
XL.

**T**HE Design of this *Psalms* is to vindicate the Goodness and Justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous state of the wicked and the afflicted conditions of good Men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain

certain Truth, that God is good to good Men : ver. SERM.

1. *Of a truth God is good to Israel, to such as are of a XL.*  
clean heart.

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptation to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below ; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good Men exposed to great calamities in this life ; as if God either neglected human affairs, or had a greater kindness for the Workers of Iniquity, than for Pious and Good Men: ver. 2. *As for me, my foot had well nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

This he says, was a very great stumbling block to good Men, and tempted them to doubt of the Providence of God ; *Therefore his People return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; and they say, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High?* ver. 10. This Sentence is somewhat obscurely render'd in our *Translation*, so as to make the sense of it difficult ; which is plainly this: *Therefore his People return hither* ; that is, therefore good Men come to this, in the greatness of their Affliction, and in the bitterness of their soul, to question God's Knowledge and care of human affairs.

*Behold, say they, ver. 12. These are the ungodly, and yet they are prosperous in the world, they increase in riches :* To what purpose then is it for any Man to be Religious and Virtuous? ver. 13. *Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.* In vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, since so little good comes of it ; nay, so far from that, that I have been in continual trouble and affliction : ver. 14. *All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

Such

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Such thoughts as these often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and disquiet : But he presently corrects himself : *ver. 15. If I say I will speak thus, I should offend against the generation of thy children :* That is, I should go against the sense of all pious and good Men, who have always believed the Providence of God notwithstanding this Objection : Which at last he tells us he had raised on purpose to try if he could find the solution of it : *ver. 16. I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes :* And then he resolves all into the unfearchable Wisdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully understood from first to last, we should see good reason to be satisfied with the equity of it : *ver. 17. 18. When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then shall I understand the end of these men : How thou didst set them in slippery places, &c.* This satisfied him, that whenever the secret design of God's Providence should be unfolded, whether in this World or the other, how strange and cross soever things might seem to be at present, yet in the issue and conclusion it would appear, that neither are bad Men so happy, nor good Men so miserable, as at present they may seem to be.

So that upon a full debate of this matter, the *Psalmist* concludes, that these Objections against Providence do spring from our ignorance, and short and imperfect view of things ; whereas if we saw the whole design from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reasonable and regular. *ver. 21. Thus my heart was grieved ; so foolish was I and ignorant, and as a beast before thee.* And in regard to himself, he tell us, that he saw great reason to acknowledge God's tender care over him in particular, and that he could find no security or comfort for himself but in God alone : --- *23. Nevertheless I am continually with thee ; thou hast holden me by thy right band : Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.* As if he had said, I am  
sensible



sensible of thy constant presence with me, and care SERM.  
of me ; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance XL.  
and direction, not doubting but that my present troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious issue And at last he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty consolation which he found in the firm belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as the great stay and support of his Soul in the worst condition that could befall him ; in the words of the *Text*, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* If a man were to chuse a happiness for himself, and were to ransack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his search and enquiry he would at last fix upon God as the chief Happiness of Man, and the true and only Rest and Center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the *Text*, *That nothing in the world but God can make man happy : Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

That Man of himself is not sufficient for his own happiness, is evident upon many accounts : Because he is liable to so many evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent nor remedy : He is full of want, which he can't supply ; compassed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redress : He is obnoxious to dangers which he must always fear, because he can never sufficiently provide against them.

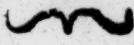
Consider Man by himself, and from under the conduct and protection of a superior and more powerful Being, and he is in a most disconsolate and forlorn condition : Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be disappointed of every thing that he hopes for : He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the justest cause of his grief is that he cannot help it ; for if he could, instead of grieving for it, he would help it : He cannot refrain from desiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, because they

are

SERM. are out of his power; and it troubles him both that  
 XL. they are so, and that he cannot help his being trou-  
 ~~~~~ bled at it.

Thus man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain; courting happiness in a thousand shapes, and the faster he follows it, the swifter it flies from him. Almost every thing promiseth happiness to us at a distance, such a step of Honour, such a pitch of Estate, such a Fortune or Match for a Child: But when we come nearer to it, either we fall short of it, or it falls short of our expectation; and it is hard to say which of these is the greatest disappointment. Our hopes are usually bigger than enjoyment can satisfy, and an evil long fear'd, besides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troublesome than the evil itself when it comes.

In a word, *man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.* He comes into the World naked and unarm'd, and from himself more destitute of the natural means of his security and support than any other Creature whatsoever, as it were on purpose to shew that he is more peculiarly the care of a superior Providence: And as Man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity; so God in great Wisdom hath so order'd things, that none of the other Creatures should have so much need of him, and so much reason to acknowledge their necessary dependance upon him. So that the Words of *David* are the very sense and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependance upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: Psal. 22. 9, 10, 11. *Thou art he,* says *David* there to God, *that tookest me out of the womb, thou madest me to hope, or thou didst keep me in safety, when I was upon my mother's breasts: I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble*

trouble is near : Trouble is always near to us, and SERM. therefore it is happy for us that God is never far XL. from any of us : *For in him we live, and move, and*  *have our being.*

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many mischiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives ; and without the Providence of God, continually insecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life itself : So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arrived at that state, and how we have continued in it so long, considering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us : That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when so many hands have been lifted up against us, and so many strokes levell'd at us, we have escap'd so free, and with so few marks and scars upon us : That when we are besieged with so many dangers, and so many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do so many ways lie open, we should yet hold out *twenty, forty, sixty* years, and some of us perhaps longer, and do still stand at the mark untouched, at least not dangerously wounded by any of them : And considering likewise this fearful and wonderful frame of a human Body, this infinitely complicated Engine ; in which, to the due performance of the several functions and offices of life, so many strings and springs, so many receptacles and channels are necessary, and all in their right frame and order ; and in which, besides the infinite imperceptible and secret ways of mortality, there are so many sluices and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, tho' we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day since we were born : I say, considering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of human Life, which is set in so slippery a place, that we still continue in the land of the living, we cannot ascribe

to

SERM. to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our soul in life, and suffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the same merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilst we continue in life we have any comfortable possession and enjoyment of ourselves and of that which makes us Men, I mean our Reason and Understanding: That our Imagination is not let loose upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: That every day we do not fall into frenzy and distraction, which next to wickedness and vice is the worst calamity, and saddest disguise of human nature: I say next to wickedness and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madness not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and necessary causes, such as are in a great measure out of our power; so that we are perpetually liable to it, from any secret and sudden disorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Disease, or the vehement transport of any Passion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder so many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the Heels of one another? like the calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had set about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be secure of no sort, no degree of happiness in this World; no not for one moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this present life: For God and another World stand and fall together. Without *Him* there can be no Life after this, and if our hopes of happiness were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings in this lower World would certainly be the most miserable.

I cannot say that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to support and comfort him against the fear of that danger. For the Nature of Man consider'd by it self, is plainly insufficient for its own happiness; so that we must necessarily look abroad, and seek for it somewhere else: And who can shew us that good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of human Nature? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following Properties.

First, It must be an all-sufficient Good.

Secondly, It must be perfect Goodness.

Thirdly, It must be firm and unchangeable in it self.

Fourthly, It must be such a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.

Fifthly, It must be eternal.

Sixthly, It must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of human Life.

Lastly, It must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquility to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy: And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supreme Good; as I shall endeavour in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, *That God is the only happiness of Man.*

First, God is an All-sufficient Good. And this does import *two* things; Wisdom to contrive our happiness, and Power to effect it; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wise* to design and contrive our Happiness; because he knows what Happiness is,

SERM. and how to frame us so as to be capable of the
 XL. happiness he designs for us ; and how to order
 and dispose all other things so, as that they shall
 be no hindrance and impediment to it.

He perfectly understands all the possibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to supply them ; all our hopes and desires, and how to satisfy them : He foresees all the dangers and evils which threaten us and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he thinks fit ; or if he permit them to come, how to support us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the last issue and result of things.

His Wisdom cannot be surprized by any accident which he did not foresee, and which he is not sufficiently provided against. The Wisdom of men is but short and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and mistakes : In many cases men know not what is safest and best for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce most to their happiness : Nay, it often happens that those very means which the wisest men chuse for their security do prove the occasions of their ruin, and they are thrown down by those very ways whereby they thought to raise and establish themselves.

Especially if God breathe upon the Counsels of men, how are their designs blasted ? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepest contrivances, and *snared in the work of their own hands* ; When *it is of the Lord*, the Wisdom of the greatest *Politicians* is turned into foolishness : For *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

But the Divine Wisdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby secur'd against all possibility of error and mistake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures,

tures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the SERM.
 use and application of them to any of his purpo- XL.
 ses : So that none of his designs of love and mer-
 cy to the Sons of Men can miscarry for want of
 good contrivance, or wise conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wise* to contrive our hap-
 piness, so is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and
 to remove out of the way all the obstacles and im-
 pediments of it. We may understand many times
 what would conduce to our happiness, but may
 not be able to compass it; but nothing is out of
 the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are dif-
 ficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God:
 Many things are impossible with us, but *with God*
all things are possible. For he is the Fountain and
 Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd,
 and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is
 perfectly subject and subordinate: He can do all
 things at once, and in an instant, and with the
 greatest ease; and no created Power can put any
 difficulty in his way, much less make any effectu-
 al resistance; because Omnipotency can check,
 and countermand, and bear down before it all o-
 ther Powers.

So that if God be on our side, who can be against
 us? We may safely *commit our souls into his hands,*
for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.
 He can give us all good things, and deliver us from
 all evil, *for his is the kingdom and the glorious power.*
 Though all Creatures should fail us, we may rely
 upon God, and live upon his All-sufficiency for
 our supply; and may say with the *Prophet,* *Though*
the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the
vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and
the fields should yield no meat; though the flock should
be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd
in the stalls; yet would i rejoice in the Lord, and joy
in the God of my salvation.

SERM.

XL. Secondly, As God is an all-sufficient Good, so he is perfect Goodness. He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his Power and Wisdom for our Good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being so but ourselves. Such is his goodness, that *he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*: And when we have provoked him by our sins, *he is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*: For *he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live*. So that if any of us be miserable, it is our own choice; if we perish, our destruction is of ourselves; For as the *Wiseman*, in one of the *Apocryphal Books*, says excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living*: But *men seek death in the error of their life, and pull destruction upon themselves, with the works of their own hands*.

So great is the goodness of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is necessary to our happiness. He design'd it for us at first, and to that end he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful transgression and disobedience of the first Parents of Mankind, and were miserably bruised and maimed by their fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to restore us to a new capacity of happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our nature, and in our stead; and thereby to become *a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the author of eternal salvation to them that believe and obey him*: And he hath likewise promised to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Gospel requires

quires of us, as the necessary conditions of our eternal Salvation. SERM. XL.

Thirdly, God is also a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithstanding his infinite Wildom, and Power, and Goodness, we might be miserable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happiness which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greatest aggravations of misery is to fall from happiness, to have been once happy and afterwards to cease to be so: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cause of our happiness could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwise than powerful, and wise, and good, all our hopes of happiness would be shaken, and would fall to the ground. But the Divine Nature is not subject to any change: As he is *the father of lights*, and *the author of every good and perfect gift*; *to with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reason, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

Fourthly, God is such a Good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this world were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; because we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who shall separate us*, saith the *Apostle*, *Rom. 8. 35. from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* We may be stripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all these can separate us from God: *I am persuaded*, as the *Apostle* goes on with great triumph, *ver. 38. 39. that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers; nor height, nor depth, nor things present,*

SERM. present, nor things to come, nor any other creature,
 XL. shall be able to separate us from the love of God which
 is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nor any other creature:

Here is a sufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and that is Sin, which is none of God's Creatures, but our own: This indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept or hinder: The joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best friends, and banish'd from all our acquaintance; but men can send us no whither from the presence of God: Our communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermost parts of the Earth.

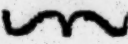
Fifthly, God is an eternal Good: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless duration, must have a happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us happy, because we shall abide and remain after it; when a very few years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from them; *But God is from everlasting to everlasting: He is the same, and his years fail not: Therefore well might David fix his happiness upon God alone, and say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee: When my heart faileth, and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

Sixthly,

Sixthly, God is able to support and comfort us, SERM. XL. in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of human Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and so long as *that* remains unwounded, *the spirit of man can bear his infirmities*. God is intimate to our Souls, and hath secret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bitterest afflictions and sharpest sufferings: He can enable us by his Grace to possess our souls in patience, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, he can give us peace and joy in believing: When we are persecuted, afflicted, and tormented, he can give us that ravishing sight of the Glories of another World, that stedfast assurance of a future Blessedness, as shall quite extinguish all sense of present sufferings: How did many of the primitive Christian Martyrs, in the midst of their torments, and under the very pangs of death rejoice in the hope of the glory of God?

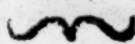
There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, and of bodily pains and sufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to trust to but *Him* only: And in the greatest Evils that can befall us in this life, He is a sure refuge and sanctuary; and to repeat the Words of the Psalmist after the Text, *When our heart fails, and our strength fails, God is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever*.

Now what would any of us do in such a Case, if it were not for God? Human Nature is liable to desperate straits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition, as to be destitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that ex-

SERM. tremity, that if it were not for God they would not
 XL. know which way to turn themselves, or how to
 entertain their thoughts with any comfortable
 consideration under their present anguish.

All men naturally resort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the most Profane and Atheistical, when they are destitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleasure in fools*; in those who neglect and despise him in their prosperity, though they owe that also entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but in their affliction they will seek him early: Then they will cry, *Lord, Lord*; but he will say to them in that day, *Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.*

Here will be the great unhappiness of such persons, that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: And at the same time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for mercy and forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it: Then, those terrible threatnings of God's Word will come to their minds; *Prov. 1. 24, 25, &c. Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my Hand, and no man regarded: But ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat the fruit*

fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own SERM.
devises: The ease of the simple shall slay them, XL.
and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. To 
 which I will add that terrible Passage in the Pro-
 phet, concerning the perverse and obstinate Jews,
 Isa. 27. 11. *They are a People of no understanding,*
therefore he that made them will not have mercy on
them, and he that formed them will shew them no fa-
vour. And Men are miserable creatures indeed,
 when God their *Maker* doth abandon them and
 hath so far hardned his heart against them, that he
 can have no pity and compassion for them.

Seventhly and Lastly, Which is consequent up-
 on all the rest, God is such a Good as can give
 perfect rest and tranquility to our minds. And
 that which cannot do this, though it had all the
 Properties before-mentioned, cannot make us hap-
 py. For he is not happy who does not think
 himself so, whatever cause he may have to think
 so. Now what in reason can give us disquiet, if we do
 firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Provi-
 dence rules and governs all things for the best; and
 that God is all that to good Men which hath now
 been said of Him: Why should not our minds be in
 perfect repose, when we are secure of the chief Good
 and have found out that which can make us happy,
 and is willing to make us so, if we be not wanting to
 ourselves, and by our wilful obstinacy and rebellion
 against him, do not oppose and frustrate his design.

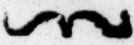
If a considerate Man were permitted to his own
 choice, to wish the greatest good to himself that
 he could possibly devise; after he had searched
 Heaven and Earth, the result of all his wishes
 would be that there were just such a Being as we
 must necessarily conceive God to be: Nor would
 he chuse any other Friend or Benefactor; any o-
 ther Protector for himself or Governor for the
 whole World, than infinite power conducted and
 managed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness; which

SERM. is the true Notion of a God : After all his enquiry he would come to the *Psalmist's* Conclusion here in the Text, *Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to seek for happiness elsewhere, but this proceeds from want of due consideration : For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly cast up and adjusted, we shall at last settle in *David's* resolution of that great *Question*, *Psal. 4. 6, 7, 8. What is the chief good of Man ? There be many, says he, that say, Who will shew us any good ? That is, Men are generally inquisitive after happiness, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it : Most Men place it in the present enjoyments of this World, but David for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully convinc'd that the happiness of Man does consist : There be many that say, Who will shew us any good ? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us : Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased. The great joy of the Men of this World is in a plentiful Harvest, and the abundance of the good things of this life : But David had found that which gave more joy and gladness to his heart, the favour of God and the light of his countenance : This gave perfect rest and tranquility to his mind, so that he needed not to enquire any further : For so it follows in the next words, I will both lay me down in peace, and rest ; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety : The Hebrew words signifies confidence or security : Here and no where else, his mind found rest, and was in perfect ease and security.*

I shall now only make two or three *Inferences* from this Discourse and so conclude.

First, This plainly shews us the great unreasonableness and folly of *Atheism*, which would banish

nish the belief of God and his Providence out of SERM.
the World: Which as it is most impious in res- XL
pect of God, so it is most malicious to Men: 
because it strikes at the very foundation of our hap-
piness, and perfectly undermines it. For if there
were no God, Man would evidently be the most
unhappy of all other Beings here below; because
his unhappiness would be laid in the very frame
of his nature, in that which distinguishes him
from all other Beings below him, I mean in his
Reason and Understanding: And he would be
so much more miserable than the Beast, by how
much he hath a farther reach, and a larger prospect
of future evils; a quicker apprehension, and a
deeper and more lasting resentment of them.

So that if any Man could see reason to stagger
his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I
am sure there is infinite reason to the contrary;
yet the belief of these things is so much for the
interest, and comfort, and happiness of Mankind,
that a wise Man would be heartily troubled to
part with a principal so favourable to his quiet,
and that does so exactly answer all the natural de-
sires and hopes and fears of Men, and is so equal-
ly calculated both for our comfort in this World,
and for our happiness in the other. For when a
Man's thoughts have ranged and wandered as far
as they can, his mind can find no rest, no pro-
bable foundation of happiness but God only; no
other reasonable, no nor tolerable *Hypothesis* and
Scheme of things for a wise Man to rely upon, and
to live and die by. For no other Principal but
this, firmly believed and truly lived up to by an
answerable Practice, was ever able to support the
generality of Mankind, and to minister true conso-
lation to them under the calamities of life, and
the pangs of death.

And if there were not something real in the Prin-
ciples of Religion, it is impossible that they should
have }

SERM. have so remarkable and so regular an effect to support our minds in every condition, upon so great
 XL. a number of persons of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant places and in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us; I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reason be ascribed either to blind Chance or mere Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform cause proportionable to so great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost evidence that any thing is capable of, and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavils and Objections against it; but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other interest but to find out Truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it; If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noonday, as there could hardly be any virtue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an impossibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this, That he would offer some other *Principles*; that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do: And till this be clearly

done

done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded, and ought not to be disturbed and put out of Possession. And this I think, puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

Secondly, from what hath been said, in the foregoing Discourse, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our trust and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to address all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need*. But now, according to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of *Rome*, the *Pfalmist* here puts a very odd and strange Question, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they must give a quite different answer from what the *Pfalmist* plainly intended; namely, that God was the sole Object of his hope and trust, and that upon Him alone he relied as his only comfort and happinefs: But to this Assertion of the *Pfalmist* the Church of *Rome* can by no means agree: They understand this matter much better than the *Pfalmist* did; namely, that besides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repose great trust and confidence, and to whom also we are to address solemn Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our Sins, for the increase of our Graces, and for eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occasions, against all sorts of dangers and diseases, for all Graces and Virtues; and, in a word, for all temporal, and spiritual, and eternal Blessings, to whom we may apply ourselves, without troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is *God blessed for evermore*, by presuming upon every occasion

SERM.
XL.

SERM. cation to make our immediate Addresses to him:

XL. For as they would make us believe tho' *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the blessed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not only intercede with God for us for all sorts of Blessings, but we may make direct and immediate Addresses to them to bestow these Blessings upon us: For so they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from several of their *Prayers* in their most publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by these direct and immediate Addresses to Angels and Saints to bestow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleased to intercede with God for these Blessings to be bestowed upon them by their Mediation: But if they mean no more, why do they say more than they mean? Why do they use such expressions as to the common sense and understanding of Mankind do signify a great deal more than they say they mean; such expressions, as they themselves do acknowledge, if they be understood according to the most obvious sense of the words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Especially when they know that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account; and since to clear themselves of it they will not alter their *Prayers*, they justly lie under the suspicion of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this matter to be true, and that by these expressions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but their solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: Yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high intrenchment upon the *Office* of the only
Me-

Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ SERM
Jefus: But let them not deceive themselves, God XL.
is not mocked: The Lord our God, is a jealous God,
and he will not give his Glory to another.

I have not yet instanced in the groffest part of their *Superstition*, not to say downright *Idolatry*, in this kind; I mean in their extravagant *Worship* of the *Blessed Virgin* and *Mother of our Lord*; whom they blasphemously call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom, by a new stile, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they think to dignify with the *modish* Title of *our Lady*; as if that could be any addition of honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *blessed among Women*: Who, if she know any thing of the follies of her *Worshippers* here below, with what disdain and indignation do we think she hears those infinite *Prayers* that are made to *Her*, and that *Sacrilegious* *Worship* which is given her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private *Devotions*, is very much beyond what they give to God and Christ? As if there were *none in Heaven but She*, nor any thing upon *Earth* to be worshipped in comparison of *Her Image*.

Nay, so far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: So far, I say, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions*, call'd *Our Lady's Psalter*, not only to apply to *Her* some part of this *Psalms*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to Israel, to them that worship his Blessed Mother?* But they have likewise profanely *burlesqued*, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole *Book* of *Psalms*, applying to *Her* almost the highest things that are there said concerning God and our *Blessed Saviour*. Hear O Heavens,
and

SERM. *and give ear O Earth, and be ye horribly astonished,*
 XL. to see the best and wisest Religion in the World
 transform'd into Superstition and Folly; and to see
 the most learned Persons in that Communion set
 themselves in good earnest to justify all these fol-
 lies and absurdities by a grave and groundless pre-
 tence to *Infallibility*.

Thirdly and Lastly, This shews us how necessa-
 ry the favour of God is to every Man's happiness:
 And there is but one way to gain his friendship and
 favour, by becoming holy and good as He is:
 Then may we rejoice and glory in God, as the
Psalmist here does, and say, *Psal. 119. Whom have*
I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth
that I desire besides thee. A wicked man dreads God
 above all things in the World, and he has great
 reason to do so: *For he is not a God that hath plea-*
sure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him:
The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all
the workers of iniquity. When by sin we depart
 from God, we forsake our own happiness: *Salva-*
tion is far from the wicked, says *David.* And a-
 gain, a little after the *Text,* *They that are far from*
thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw near
to God. Now by Holiness and Goodness we draw
 near to *Him,* who alone can make us happy.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind
 there should be a God, because we cannot possibly
 be happy without Him: But then it is no man's
 Interest to be wicked, because thereby we make
Him our Enemy in whose favour is *Life,* and upon
 whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our
 Happiness, we must be sure to make him our
 Friend; and then we may promise to our selves
 all those advantages which the Friendship of so
 great and powerful a Patron can give us: And
 there is but one way to establish a firm Friend-
 ship between God and us, and that is by doing
 his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws:

Ye are my friends, faith our blessed Lord, if ye do SERM.
whatsoever I command you : This is the love of God, XL.
faith St. John, that we keep his commandments:
And to love God is the way to be made partakers
of those glorious things which God hath prepared
for them that love Him: Such as eye hath not
seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart
of man: Which God of his infinite Goodness
grant we may all at last be made partakers of
for his Mercies sake in *Jefus Christ*: To whom
with thee O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all
Honour and Glory, Dominion, and Power, both
now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLI.

A Thanksgiving-Sermon for the late
Victory at Sea.

*Preached before the KING and QUEEN
at Whitehall, October 27. 1692.*

+ JER. ix. 23, 24.

*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory
in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory
in his might; let not the rich man glory in his
riches; But let him that glorieth, glory in this,
That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that
I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness,
and judgment, and righteousness in the earth:
For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

SERM.
XLI.

THESE words are a message from God sent by his Prophet to the People of the *Jews*, who trusted in their own *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*, for their safety and preservation from that Destruction which, in the former part of this *Chapter*, God had threatn'd to bring upon them by the King of *Babylon*. To take them off from this vain confidence is this message sent to them, *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness,*

*ness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the Earth: SERM.
For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. XLI.*

In the handling of these Words, I shall abstract from the particular Occasion of them, and only consider the general Truth contain'd in them, Which I shall do under these two Heads.

First, What we are not to glory in: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.

Secondly, What it is that is matter of true glory: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

1. *What we are not to glory in.* The Text instanceth in *three* things which are the great Idols of Mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themselves and to place their confidence, namely, *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*. I shall consider these severally, and shew how little reason there is to glory in any of them.

1. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* This may comprehend both human Knowledge, and likewise prudence in the management of Affairs. We will suppose both these to be intended here by the name of *Wisdom*, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, that is, neither in the largeness and compass of his Knowledge and Understanding, nor in the Skill and Dexterity, in the contrivance and conduct of human Affairs; and that for these *two* reasons.

First, Because the highest pitch of human Knowledge and Wisdom is very imperfect.

Secondly, Because when Knowledge and Wisdom are with much difficulty in any competent measure attained, how easily are they lost?

First, *The highest pitch of human knowledge and wisdom is very imperfect.* Our Ignorance doth

SERM: vastly exceed our Knowledge at the best. Wisdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attain'd, but perfection in it utterly to be despair'd of. Where is there to be found so strong and sound a Head, as hath no soft place: so perfect, so clear an Understanding as hath no flaw, no dark water in it? How hard a matter is it to be truly wise? And yet there are so many Pretenders to Wisdom as would almost tempt a man to think that nothing is easier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal distribution of other things, as of health and strength, of power and riches: But if we will trust the judgment of most men concerning themselves, nothing is more equally shared among Mankind than a good degree of Wisdom and Understanding. Many will grant others to be superior to them in other gifts of Nature, as in bodily strength and stature; and in the gifts of Fortune, as in riches and honour; because the difference between one man and another in these qualities is many times so gross and palpable, that no body hath the face to deny it: But very few in comparison, unless it be in meer compliment and civility, will yield others to be wiser than themselves; and yet the difference in this also is for the most part very visible to every body but themselves.

So that true Wisdom is a thing very extraordinary. Happy are they that have it: And next to them, not those many that think they have it, but those few that are sensible of their own defects and imperfections, and know that they have it not.

And among all the kinds of Wisdom none is more nice and difficult and meets with more frequent disappointments, than that which men are most apt to pride themselves in, I mean *political*

cal wisdom and prudence; because it depends SERM. upon so many contingent Causes, any one of XLI. which failing, the best laid Design breaks and falls in pieces: It depends upon the uncertain wills and fickle humours, the mistaken and mutable interests of men, which are perpetually shifting from one point to another, so that no body knows where to find them: Besides an unaccountable mixture of that which the *Heathen* called *Fortune*, but we *Christians* by its true name, the Providence of God; which does frequently interpose in human Affairs, and loves to confound the wisdom of the wise, and to turn their counsels into foolishness.

Of this we have a most remarkable Example in *Achitophel*, of whose wisdom the *Scripture* gives this extraordinary testimony, that the counsel which he counselled in those days was as if one enquired at the oracle of God: Such was all the counsel of *Achitophel* both with *David* and with *Abfalom*. It seems he gave very good counsel also to *Abfalom*, and because he would not follow it, was discontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himself: And now who would pride himself in being so very wise as to be able to give the best counsel in the world, and yet so very weak as to make away himself, because he to whom it was given was not wise enough to take it?

The like miscarriages often happen in point of military Skill and Prudence. A great *Prince* or *General* is sometimes so very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a Battle; and then at another time, and perhaps in another Element so rash and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten: As if the two Elements made the difference; and caution were great wisdom at Land, and confidence and presumption great prudence at Sea. But the true

SERM. reason of these things lies much deeper, in the se-
 XLI. cret Providence of almighty God, who when he
 pleases can so govern and over-rule both the un-
 derstandings and the wills of men, as shall best
 serve his own wise purpose and design.

And as the highest pitch of human Wisdom is very imperfect in it self, so is it much more so in comparison with the divine Knowledge and Wisdom: Compar'd with this it is mere folly, and less than the understanding and wisdom of a child to that of the wisest man. *The foolishness of God*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. 1. 25. *is wiser than men*, that is, the least grain of Divine wisdom is infinitely beyond all the wisdom of men: But in opposition to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of men is less than nothing and vanity. Let men design things never so prudently, and make them never so sure, even to the *Popish* and *French* degree of infallibility; let them reckon upon it as a *blow that cannot fail*: Yet after all, the counsel of the Lord *that shall stand*, and he will do all his pleasure; *for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord*.

And now we may ask the Question which Job does, *ch. 28. v. 12. Where shall Wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* And we must answer it as he does, *ch. 28. v. 12. It is not to be found in the land of the living*: unless it be that one infallible point of Wisdom to which God directs every man, and of which every man is capable, *viz. Religion and the Fear of God*, Job 28. 28. *Unto Man he said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding*.

Secondly, *When knowledge and wisdom are with great difficulty in any competent measure attain'd, how easily are they lost?* By a disease, by a blow upon the Head; by a sudden and violent passion, which may

may disorder the strongest Brain, and confound **SERM.**
the clearest Understanding in a moment: Nay e- **XLI.**
ven the excess of knowledge and wisdom, espe-
cially if attended with pride, as too often it is, is
very dangerous, and does many times border up-
on distraction and run into madness: Like an *Ath-*
letick constitution and perfect state of health,
which is observ'd by *Physicians* to verge upon
some dangerous Disease, and to be a forerunner
of it.

And when a man's Understanding is once craz'd
and shatter'd, how are the finest notions and
thoughts of the wisest man blunder'd and broken,
perplex'd and entangled? like a puzzled lump
of silk, so that the man cannot draw out a thought
to any length, but is forc'd to break it off and to
begin at another end. Upon all which and many
more accounts, *Let not the wise man glory in his*
wisdom, which is so very imperfect; so hard to be
attain'd, and yet so easy to be lost.

2. *Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.*
Which whether it be meant of natural strength
of body, or of military force and power, how
weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foil'd
by an unequal strength?

If we understand it of the natural strength of
men's bodies, how little reason is there to glory
in that, in which so many of the Creatures be-
low us do by so many degrees excel us? In that,
which may so many ways be lost; by sickness, by
a maim, and by many other external Accidents;
and which however will decay, of it self, and by
Age sink into infirmity and weakness.

And how little reason is there to glory in that,
which is so frequently foil'd by an unequal strength?
of which *Goliath* is a famous instance. When he
defied the Host of *Israel*, and would needs have
the matter decided by a single Combat, God in-
spired *David* to accept the Challenge; who tho'

SERM. he was no wise comparable to him in strength,
 XLI. and would have been nothing in his hands in close
 fight, yet God directed him to assail him at a distance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a stone out of a sling, which struck the Giant in the forehead, and brought his unweildly bulk down to the earth.

Or if by *might* we understand military force and power, how little likewise is that to be gloried in? considering the uncertain events of War, and how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpose to cast the Victory on the unlikely side. It is *Solomon's* observation, that such are the interpositions of Divine Providence in human Affairs, that the Event of things is many times not at all answerable to the power and probability of second Causes: *Eccles. 9 11. I returned, says he, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong.*

And one way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpose to decide the Events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seasons and Weather in Favour of one side: As by sending great Snows, or violent Rains to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great Design: By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the Conjunction of a powerful Fleet: And by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the Advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well-laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late signal Deliverances and Victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the Book of *Job*: Which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this Book to be incomparably
 the

the most ancient of all other, and much elder SERM.
 than *Moses*: And yet it is written with as lively XLI.
 a sense of the Providence of God, and as noble
 Figures and Flights of Eloquence as perhaps any
 Book extant in the World. The *Passage* I mean
 is, where God to convince *Job* of his ignorance
 in the secrets of Nature and Providence poseth
 him with many hard Questions, and with this
 amongst the rest, *Job* 38. 22, 23. *Hast thou enter-*
ed into the treasures of the Snow? hast thou seen
the treasures of the Hail, which I have reserv'd
against the time of trouble, against the Day of Bat-
tel and War? The meaning of which is, that the
 Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to
 determine the Events of War, by governing the
 Seasons and the Weather, and by making the
 Snows and Rains, the Winds and Storms to fulfil
 his Word, and to execute his Pleasure.

Of this we have a remarkable Instance in the
 defeat of *Sisera's* mighty Army; against whom in
 the Song of *Deborah*, the Stars are said to have
 fought in their courses: The expression is *Poetical*,
 but the plain meaning of it is, that by mighty
 and sudden Rains, which the common opinion did
 ascribe to a special influence of the Planets, the
 River of *Kishon*, near which *Sisera's* Army lay,
 was so raised and swollen as to drown the greatest
 part of that huge Host. For so *Deborah* ex-
 plains the fighting of the Stars in their courses a-
 gainst *Sisera*: They fought, says she from Heaven,
 the Stars in their courses fought against *Sisera*, the
 River of *Kishon* swept them away: As if the Stars
 which were supposed by their influence to have
 caused those sudden and extraordinary Rains, had
 set themselves in Battel-array against *Sisera* and
 his Army.

Therefore, Let not the mighty man glory in his
 might, which is so small in it self, but in opposi-
 tion to God is weakness and nothing. The weak-
 ness

SERM. *ness of God, says St. Paul, is stronger than men.*

XLI. All Power to do mischief is but impotence, and therefore no matter of boasting: *Psal. 52. 1. Why boasteth thou thy self, thou Tyrant, that thou art able to do mischief? the goodness of God endureth continually:* The goodness of God is too hard for the pride and malice of man, and will last and hold out when that hath tir'd and spent it self.

Thirdly, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.* In these, men are apt to pride themselves: even the meanest and poorest spirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good store of that together, how will they swell and strut? as if because they are *rich* and *increased in goods* they wanted nothing.

But we may do well to consider, that Riches are things without us; not the real Excellencies of our Nature, but the accidental Ornaments of our Fortune: If they descend upon us, they are the Privilege of our Birth, not the effect of our Wisdom and Industry; and those things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own: And if they be the fruit of our own prudent industry, that is no such matter of glorying; because men of much flower understandings do commonly outdo others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low design of being rich.

At the best, Riches are uncertain. *Charge them,* says St. Paul, *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches:* Men have little reason to pride themselves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not: So the wise man speaks of Riches, *Prov. 23. 5. Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards Heaven:* He expresses it in such a manner, as if a
rich

rich man fat brooding over an estate till it was *SERM.*
fledg'd and had gotten it self wings to fly away. *XLI.*

But that which is the most stinging consideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good estate; so that instead of being the means of our happiness, it may prove the occasion of our ruin: So the same wise man observes, *Eccles. 5. 13. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general Pardon, both as to Life and Estate, for no other visible reason but his vast and overgrown Fortune: So *Solomon* observes to us again, *Prov. 1. 18. Such are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.* And why should any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cause of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been prosecuted against a man of a middle Fortune. For these reasons, and a great many more, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

II. I proceed to consider, *What it is that is matter of true glory.* But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

That he understandeth and knoweth me: Here are two words used to express the thing more fully, *understanding* and *knowledge*, which seem not only to import right apprehensions of the Being, and Providence, and Perfections of God; but likewise a lively sense of these things, and affections suitable to these apprehensions.

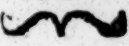
That

SERM. *That he understandeth and knoweth me, that I*
 XLI. *am the Lord, that is, the Creator and the Sovereign Governor of the World.*

Which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.

The best knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the Knowledge of the Divine Nature and Perfections; Especially of those which are most proper for our imitation; and such are those mention'd in the *Text, loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness*; which we may distinguish thus: *Loving-kindness* comprehends God's milder Attributes, his *Goodness* and *Mercy*, and *Patience*: *Judgment* signifies his severe dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his People, or in the remarkable Punishment of great Offenders for example and warning to others: *Righteousness* seems to be a word of a larger signification, and to denote that universal Rectitude of the Divine Nature which appears in all the Administrations of his Providence here below; for the *Text* speaks of the Exercise of these Perfections in this World: *which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

Several of the Perfections of the Divine Nature are incommunicable to a Creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be proposed to us for a Pattern: as *self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency*; the *eternity*, and the *immensity* of the Divine Being: To be the *original Cause* of all other things, and the *Sovereign Governor* of the whole World: For God only is sufficient for *that*; and to be a Match for all the World, a *nec pluribus impar*, is not a *Motto* fit for a mortal man. A Creature may swell with pride till it burst, before it can stretch it self to this pitch of Power and Greatness: It is an insufferable Presumption and a sottish Ignorance of the necessary Bounds
 and

and Limits of our Being, to think to resemble SERM.
 God in these Perfections: This was the Ambiti- XLI.
 on of *Lucifer*, to *ascend into Heaven*, and to be like 
 the most High.

In our imitation of God we must still keep within the station of Creatures; not affecting an *Independency* and *sovereignty* like God and to be *omnipotent* as he is: *Job. 40. 9. Hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?* as God himself argues with *Job*.

For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. God takes pleasure to exercise these Perfections himself, and to see them imitated by us; and the imitation of these Divine Perfections is our perfection and glory; in comparison of which all human *wisdom*, and *power*, and *riches*, are so far from being matter of glory, that they are very despicable and pitiful things: Knowledge and Skill to devise mischief, and power to effect it, are the true Nature and Character of the Devil and his Angels; those apostate and accursed Spirits, who in temper and disposition are most contrary to God, who is the Rule and Pattern of all perfection.

I shall only make two *Observations* or *Inferences* from what hath been said, and then apply the whole Discourse to the great Occasion of this Day: And they are these.

First, That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable perfections of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, That the Nature of God is the true *Idea* and pattern of Perfection and Happiness.

First, That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature: Upon those more especially which to us are most easy and intelligible: such as are those mentioned in the *Text*. And this makes the Knowledge of God, and of these Perfections, to be so useful and so valuable: Because
 all

SERM. all Religion is founded in right Notions of God,
 XLI. and of his Perfections: Infomuch that Divine
 ~~~~~ Revelation it self does suppose these for its Foundation, and can signify nothing to us unless these be first known and believed: For unless we be first firmly persuaded of the Providence of God and of his particular care of Mankind, why should we suppose that he makes any Revelation of his Will to us? Unless it be first naturally known that God is a God of Truth, what ground is there for the belief of his Word? So that the Principles of *Natural Religion* are the foundation of that which is reveal'd: And therefore nothing can in reason be admitted to be a Revelation from God, which does plainly contradict his essential Perfections.

Upon this *Principle*, a great many *Doctrines* are without more a do to be rejected, because they do plainly and at first sight contradict the Divine Nature and Perfections. I will give a few *Instances*, instead of many that might be given.

In virtue of this *Principle* I cannot believe, upon the pretended Authority or infallibility of any Person or Church, that force is a fit Argument to produce Faith: No man shall ever persuade me, no not the Bishop of *Meaux* with all his Eloquence, that Prisons and Tortures, Dragoons and the Gallies, are proper means to convince the Understanding, and either *Christian* or *Human* Methods of converting men to the true Religion.

For the same Reason I cannot believe, that God would not have men to understand their publick Prayers, nor the Lessons of Scripture which are read to them: Because a Lesson is something that is to be learnt, and therefore a Lesson that is not to be understood is nonsense; for if it be not understood how can it be learnt?

As little can I believe, that God who caused the *Holy Scriptures* to be written for the Instruction

on of Mankind, did ever intend that *they* should be lock'd up and conceal'd from the People in an unknown Tongue. SERM,  
XLI.

Least of all can I believe that *Doctrine* of the Council of *Trent*, That the saving Efficacy of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the intention of the Priest that administers them: Which is to say, that tho' the People believe and live never so well, yet they may be damn'd by shoals, and whole parishes together, at the pleasure of the Priest: And this for no other reason, but because the Priest is so cross and so cruel that he will not intend to save them.

Now can any man believe this, that hath any tolerable Notion either of the Goodness or Justice of God? May we not appeal to God in this, as *Abraham* did in another Case? *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do after this manner: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Much more, to destroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent People should lie at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverse Priest, to be sav'd or damn'd by him as he thinks fit, *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* For, to drive the argument to the head, if this be to do right, there is no possibility of doing wrong.

Thus in things which are more obscure we should govern all our Reasonings concerning God and Religion by that which is clear and unquestionable, and should with *Moses* lay down this for a certain Principle, *All his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He:* And say with *St. Paul*, *Is there then unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* And again, *We know that the Judgment of God is according to truth.*

2dly, The other Inference is this, *That the Nature of God is the true Idea and Pattern of Perfection*

SERM. *tion and happiness:* And therefore nothing but our  
 XLI. own conformity to it can make us happy: And for  
 this reason, to understand and know God is our  
 great excellency and glory, because it is necessary to  
 our imitation of *Him* who is the best and happiest  
 Being. And so far as we are from resembling God,  
 so far are we distant from Happiness and the true  
 temper of the Blessed. For Goodness is an essential  
 ingredient of Happiness; and as without Goodness  
 there can be no true Majesty and Greatness, so nei-  
 ther any true Felicity and Blessedness.

Now Goodness is a generous disposition of mind  
 to diffuse and communicate itself by making others  
 to partake of our Happiness, in such degrees as they  
 are capable: For no Being is so happy as it might  
 be, that hath not the power and the pleasure to  
 make others happy: This surely is the highest plea-  
 sure, I had almost said pride, of a great Mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of Happiness, in  
 any thing without us. Happiness must be within us;  
 the foundation of it must be laid in the inward  
 frame and disposition of our Spirits: And the very  
 same causes and ingredients which make up the  
 Happiness of God must be found in us, tho' in a  
 much inferior degree, or we cannot be happy.  
 They understand not the nature of Happiness;  
 who hope for it upon any other terms: He who is  
 the Author and Fountain of Happiness cannot con-  
 vey it to us by any other way, than by planting in  
 us such dispositions of mind as are in truth a kind of  
 participation of the Divine Nature, and by enduing  
 us with such qualities as are the necessary Materials  
 of Happiness: and a man may as soon be well with-  
 out health as happy without Goodness.

If a wicked man were taken up into Heaven, yet  
 if he still continue the same bad man that he was be-  
 fore, *cælum non animum mutavit*, he may have  
 chang'd the *Climate*, and be gone into a far Coun-  
 try; but because he carries *himself* still along with  
 him,



him, he will still be miserable from himself: Because the man's mind is not chang'd all the while, which would signify a thousand times more to his happiness, than change of place, or of any outward circumstance whatsoever: For a bad man hath a *Fiend* in his own Breast, and the fewel of Hell in his guilty Conscience.

There is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary and essential to Happiness, and *that* is Holiness and Goodness, which is the very Nature of God; and so far as any man departs from this temper, so far he removes himself and runs away from Happiness. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to itself: And till this be cur'd, it is as impossible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of joint to be at ease; because the man's Spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were toss'd from its Center; and till that be set right and restored to its proper and natural state, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no rest and peace within himself. *The wicked, saith the Prophet, is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest: There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked: No peace with God, no peace with his own mind; for a bad man is at perpetual discord and wars within himself: And hence, as St. James tells us, come wars and fightings without us, even from our lusts which war in our members.*

And now that I have mention'd *wars and fightings without us*, this cannot but bring to mind the great and glorious Occasion of this Day: Which gives us manifold cause of Praise and Thanksgiving to Almighty God: For several wonderful Mercies and Deliverances; and more particularly, for a most glorious Victory at Sea, vouchsafed to their *Majesties* Fleet in this last Summer's Expedition.

For several great Mercies and Deliverances: For a wonderful Deliverance indeed, from a sudden *Invasion* design'd upon us by the inveterate and implacable

SERM. cable Enemies of our Peace and Religion ; which by the  
 XLI. merciful Providence of God was happily and strangely  
 prevented, when it was just upon the point of execution.

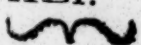
Next for the preservation of our *Gracious Sovereign*, from that horrid and most barbarous Attempt design'd upon his Sacred Person : And from those great and manifold Dangers to which he was expos'd in his late tedious expedition : and for his safe and most welcome Return to us.

And lastly for a most glorious *Victory at Sea* : The greatest and the cheapest that ever the Sun saw, from his first setting out to run his course. The Opportunity indeed of this Victory was thro' the rashness and confidence of our Enemies, by the wise Providence of God, put into our Hands : But the improvement of this opportunity into so great and happy a victory, we owe under God, to the matchless Conduct and Courage of the brave *Admiral*, and to the invincible Resolution and Valour of the *Captains* and *Seamen*.

This great Deliverance from the design'd *Invasion*, and this glorious *Victory*, God vouchsafed to us at *Home*, whilst his Sacred Majesty was so freely hazarding his Royal Person *abroad*, in the Publick Cause of the Rights and Liberties of almost all *Europe*.

And now what may God justly expect from us, as a meet return for his Goodness to us ? What ? but that we should *glorify* Him, first by *offering praise* and thanksgiving ; and then, by *ordering our conversation aright*, that he may still delight to *shew us his Salvation*.

God might have stood aloof from us in the Day of our Distress, and have said to us as he once did to the People of *Israel*, so often have I deliver'd you from the hands of your Enemies, but ye have still provoked me more and more, *Wherefore I will deliver you no more* : He might have said of us, as he did of the same People, *Judg. 10. 13. I will hide my Face from them, I will see what their end shall be* : *Deut. 32. 20. For they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no Faith* : Our resolutions and promises of better obedience are not to be trust-  
 ed ;

ed; all our Repentance and Righteousness are but as SERM.  
*the morning cloud, and like the early dew which passeth* XLI.  
*away:* Nay methinks God seems now to say to us,   
 as he did of old to Jerusalem, Jer. 6. 8. *Be instructed*  
*O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, and I*  
*make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.*

We are here met together this Day, to pay our solemn  
 Acknowledgments to the God of our Salvation; who  
 hath shewed strength with his arm, and hath scattered  
 the proud in the imagination of their heart: Even to  
 him that exerciseth loving-kindness, and Judgment, and  
 Righteousness in the Earth: In Him will we glory as  
 our sure Refuge and Defence, as our Mighty Deli-  
 verer, and the Rock of our Salvation.

And now I have only to intreat your patience a  
 little longer whilst I apply what hath been discoursed  
 upon this *Text* a little more closely to the Occasion  
 of this Day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And blessed be God for this happy *Occasion*: The  
 greatest *England* ever had, and, in the true conse-  
 quences of it, perhaps the greatest that *Europe* ever  
 had of Praise and Thanksgiving.

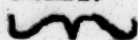
You have heard two sorts of Persons described in  
 the *Text*, by very different Characters: The *One*,  
 that glory in their *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*:  
 The *other*, that glory in this, that they understand  
 and know God to be the Lord, which exerciseth loving-  
 kindness, and judgment and righteousness in the earth.

And we have seen these two Characters exempli-  
 fied, or rather drawn to the life, in this present  
 Age. We who live in this western part of *Christen-*  
*dom* have seen a mighty Prince, by the just permission  
 of God raised up to be a Terror and Scourge to all  
 his Neighbours: A Prince, who had in perfection  
 all the advantages mentioned in the former part of  
 the *Text*: And who, in the opinion of many who  
 had been long dazzled with his Splendor and Great-  
 ness, hath pass'd for many years, for the most *poli-*  
*tick*, and *powerful*, and *richest* Monarch that hath ap-  
 pear'd in these parts of the World for many Ages.



SERM.

XLI.



Who hath govern'd his Affairs by the deepest and steddieſt Counſels, and the moſt refined Wiſdom of this World: A Prince mighty and powerful in his preparations for War; formidable for his vaſt and well diſciplin'd Armies, and for his great naval Force: And who had brought the Art of War almoſt to that perfection, as to be able to conquer and do his buſineſs without fighting: A Myſtery hardly known to former Ages and Generations: And all this Skill and Strength united under one abſolute Will, not hamper'd or bound up by any reſtraints of Law or Conſcience.

A Prince that commands the Eſtates of all his Subjects, and of all his Conqueſts; which hath furniſhed him with an almoſt inexhauſtible Treasuſe and Revenue: And one, who if the World doth not greatly miſtake him, hath ſufficiently *gloried* in all theſe Advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not *knowing God to be the Lord, which exerciſes loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth*; how hath the pride of all his Glory been ſtain'd by Tyranny and Oppreſſion, by Injuſtice and Cruelty; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making war upon his Neighbours without Reaſon, or even colour of Provocation? And this in a more barbarous manner than the moſt barbarous Nations ever did; carrying Fire and Deſolation whereſoever he went, and laying waſte many and great Cities without neceſſity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible Rebuke the Providence of God hath given to this mighty Monarch, in the full Career of his Fortune and Fury. The conſideration whereof brings to my thoughts thoſe paſſages in the *Prophet* concerning old *Babylon*, that ſtanding and perpetual Type of the great Oppreſſors and Perſecutors of God's true Church and Religion: *Iſa. 14. 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13. How is the oppreſſor ceaſed? the exacter of gold ceaſed? He who ſmote the people in wrath with a continual ſtroke, he who ruled the nations in anger is himſelf perſecuted, and none hindreth. The whole*

whole earth is at rest and is quiet, and breaks forth SERM.  
 into singing : The grave beneath is moved for thee, to XLI.  
 meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee,  
 even all the captains of the earth ; it hath raised up  
 from their thrones all the kings of the nations ; all they  
 shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak  
 as we are ? art thou also become like unto us ? how art  
 thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morn-  
 ing ? how art thou cut down to the ground that didst  
 weaken the nations ? For thou hast said in thy heart, I  
 will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above  
 the stars of God : I will sit also upon the mount of the  
 congregation in the sides of the north, that is, upon  
 Mount Zion ; for just so the Psalmist describes it ;  
 Psal. 48. 2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the  
 whole earth is mount Zion, on the sides of the north.  
 Here the King of Babylon threatens to take Jerusa-  
 lem, and to demolish the Temple where the Congre-  
 gation of Israel met for the Worship of the true  
 God ; I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation  
 in the sides of the north. Much in the same style  
 with the threatnings of modern Babylon, I will destroy  
 the Reformation, I will extirpate the northern Herefy.

And then he goes on, I will ascend above the height  
 of the clouds, I will be like the most High : Yet thou  
 shalt be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the  
 pit : They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,  
 and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made  
 the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ; that  
 made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities  
 thereof, and opened not the house of his prisoners ?

God seems already to have begun this work, in  
 the late glorious Victory at Sea ; and I hope he will  
 cut it short in righteousness. I have sometimes here-  
 tofore wondred, why at the Destruction of modern  
 and mystical Babylon the Scripture should make so  
 express mention of great wailing and lamentation  
 for the loss of her Ships and Seamen : Little imagin-  
 ing thirty years ago, that any of the Kingdoms who  
 had given their power to the beast, Rev. 18. 17.  
 would

SERM. would ever have arrived to that mighty *Naval Force*:

XLI. But the *Scripture saith nothing in vain.*

Whether, and how far, Success is an Argument of a good Cause, I shall not now debate: but thus much, I think, may safely be affirmed, that the Providence of God doth sometimes, without plain and downright Miracles, so visibly shew itself, that we cannot without great stupidity and obstinacy refuse to acknowledge it.

I grant, the Cause must first be manifestly just, before Success can be made an Argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: And if the Cause of true Religion, and the necessary defence of it against a false and idolatrous Worship, be a good Cause, *Ours* is so: And I do not here beg the Question; we have abundantly proved it to the confusion of our Adversaries: if the vindication of the common Liberties of Mankind against Tyranny and Oppression, be a good Cause, then *Ours* is so: And this needs not to be proved, it is so glaringly evident to all the World. And as our Cause is not like *theirs*, so neither hath *their Rock* been like *our Rock*, *our Enemies themselves being Judges.*

And yet as bad an Argument as Success is of a good Cause, I am sorry to say it, but I am afraid it is true, it is like in the conclusion to prove the best Argument of all other to convince those who have so long pretended Conscience against Submission to the present Government.

Mere success is certainly one of the worst Arguments in the World of a good Cause, and the most improper to satisfy Conscience: And yet we find by experience, that in the issue it is the most successful of all other Arguments; and does in a very odd, but effectual way, satisfy the Consciences of a great many Men by shewing them their Interest.

God has of late visibly made bare his Arm in our behalf, tho' some are still so blind and obstinate that they will not see it: Like those of whom the *Prophet* complains, Isa. 26. 11. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted*



*lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, and be a-  
blamed for their envy at thy people.*

SERM.  
XLI.

Thus have I represented unto you a mighty *Monarch*, who like a fiery *Comet* hath hung over *Europe* for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made such terrible havock and devastations in this part of the *World*.

Let us now turn our View to the other part of the *Text*: And behold a greater than he is here: A Prince of a quite different Character, who does *understand and know God to be the Lord, which does exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth*: And who hath made it the great study and endeavour of his Life to imitate these Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of human Nature in this mortal State will admit: I say, a greater than he is here: Who never said or did any insolent thing, but instead of despising his Enemies, has upon all occasions encounter'd them with an undaunted Spirit and Resolution.

This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a check to this mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Nostrils of this great *Leviathan* who has so long had his pastime in the Seas.

But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a Man much better than himself when he believed him to have been slain at the *Boyne*: And indeed Death came then as near to him as was possible without killing him: But the merciful Providence of God was pleased to step in for his Preservation, almost by a Miracle: For I do not believe that from the first use of great Guns to *that Day*, any mortal Man ever had his shoulder so kindly kiss'd by a Cannon-bullet.

But I will not trespass any further upon that which is the great Ornament of all his other Virtues; though I have said nothing of Him but what all the World does see and must acknowledge: He is as much above being flatter'd as it is beneath an honest and generous mind to flatter.

Let

SERM. Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoyce in  
 XLI. the God of our Salvation: Let us now in the pre-  
 ~~~~~sence of all his People pay our most thankful ac-  
 knowledgments to him *who is worthy to be praised*; even to *the Lord God of Israel, who alone doth wondrous things*: Who giveth victory unto kings, and hath preserved our David his servant from the hurtful sword. And let us humbly beseech Almighty God that he would long preserve to us the valuable Blessing of our two excellent Princes; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels; not to rescue two or three Persons, but almost a whole Nation out of *Sodom*: By saving us I hope at last from our Vices, as well as at first from that Vengeance which was just ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two sovereign Princes reigning together, and in the same Throne; and yet so entirely one, as perhaps no Nation, no Age can furnish us with a Parallel: Two Princes perfectly united in the same Design of Promoting the true Religion, and the publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and as far as is possible, by repairing the Breaches, and healing the Divisions of a miserable distracted Church and Nation: In a Word, two Princes who are contented to sacrifice themselves and their whole Time to the care of the Publick: And for the sake of that to deny themselves almost all sorts of ease and pleasure: *To deny themselves*, did I say? No, they have wisely and judiciously chosen the truest and highest Pleasure that this World knows, the Pleasure of doing good, and being Benefactors to Mankind. May they have a long and happy Reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in store for themselves a Happiness without measure, and without end, in God's glorious and everlasting Kingdom: For his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever.
 Amen.

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The End of the Second VOLUME.